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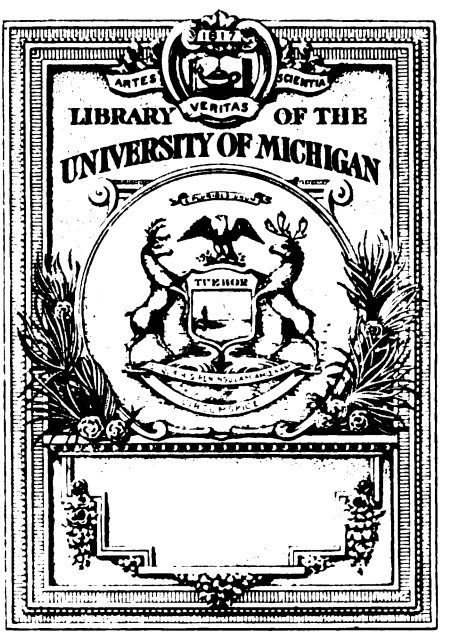
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MODERN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

NOT FOR

HANDEL

MODERN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

BY
R. A. STREATFEILD

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

SECOND EDITION

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INTRODUCTION

SOME kind of explanation, if not an actual apology, is due from author to public for the appearance of a book of this kind, in which so much ground already familiar is traversed once more. I fear that I cannot claim any very striking novelty of treatment for the following series of essays on the development of modern music, or rather on the men who have most aided that development. I was led to undertake the book by the hope of being able to trace, in a study of the works of the great composers, the growth of the idea of a poetic basis in music. But such an aspiration, however constantly present in the mind of the author, means as a rule but little to the reader. I will only say therefore that it has been my aim in the following pages to give as little space as possible to the merely biographical side of my task, save when the incidents of a composer's life affected his music in any salient manner, and to lay stress upon the development of music as a means of personal expression, rather than upon its merely technical history, by tracing the character of a composer in his music rather than by criticising his

works in detail. How far I am from having reached the goal of even this modest ambition, no one can realise more fully than myself. I can only hope that my humble efforts may tempt an enthusiast with more opportunities for research than the scanty leisure of an official life affords, to undertake the history of programme music, if I may use the somewhat vague and unsatisfactory term now generally employed to express all instrumental music that is not purely abstract.

There are many who will be inclined to deny that programme music has a history at all, or at any rate one worth writing, but as a matter of fact the idea that music is capable of any but an abstract use is far older than is generally supposed. Nearly four hundred years ago, at a time when music, from our point of view, was barely articulate, Sir Thomas More wrote of his Utopians: "For all their music, both that they play upon instruments and that they sing with man's voice, doth so resemble and express natural affections, the sound and tune is so applied and made agreeable to the thing, that whether it be a prayer or else a ditty of gladness, of patience, of trouble, of mourning or of anger, the fashion of the melody doth so represent the meaning of the thing, that it doth wonderfully move, stir, pierce and inflame the hearers' minds." I should be glad to think that anything I have

written would inflame my readers' minds with the belief that music is not the mere science that our friends the advocates of "abstract music" believe, but a means of expressing human emotion as definite and as incisive as any of its sister arts.

It would be useless for me to try to give anything like a complete list of the books which have helped me in writing the following pages. Every one who writes about Beethoven and Schubert must necessarily be under great obligations to Sir George Grove, and Mr Fuller Maitland's writings on Brahms and Mr Barclay Squire's articles on Purcell have been to me no less useful in fact and fruitful in suggestion. I should like also to record the assistance which I have derived from Mr Alfred Kalisch's interesting analytical programmes to the works of Strauss, and to thank Mrs Legh, of Adlington Hall, Cheshire, for kindly allowing me to publish a facsimile of her autograph of Handel's "Hunting Song."

R. A. S.

MODERN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN MUSIC

IT is probable that few authorities would agree as to the point at which the history of modern music can strictly be said to begin, but one thing may be taken as certain, that for its beginnings we must look far back into the mists of the Middle Ages, when history is barely distinguishable from romance, and fact and fiction stand side by side. First of all it is necessary to find out precisely what we mean by modern as opposed to medieval music, and in what essential points the one differs from the other.

In a word, then, the main characteristics of modern music as opposed to medieval are rhythm, harmony, and the key system. The evolution of our modern system of harmony from the weird "Organum" of Hucbald, and of our keys from the ecclesiastical modes, was so gradual that it is impossible to fix upon any date as the precise moment when one gave way definitely to the other. The idea of rhythm is, of course, as old as the

human race itself. The primitive efforts of a savage to give musical expression to his feelings are rhythmical without being musical, and the idea of melody is a far later and more advanced development. Yet, in spite of the hoary antiquity of rhythm, what we may call its artistic employment is of comparatively recent growth, and it is the use of rhythm in this sense that forms one of the main characteristics of modern as opposed to medieval music. To the union of rhythm with harmony modern music owes its birth, and it is to the first dawn of an attempt to incorporate these two mighty forces that we must look if we wish to date the beginnings of modern music.

From the time of St Ambrose onward the river of music flowed in two channels, parallel but independent. The course of ecclesiastical music under the leaden sway of the Church was so little removed from actual stagnation that it was not until the tenth century that the first feeble attempts at harmony were made by Hucbald, and it took another five hundred years to arrive at even such mastery of counterpoint as is exhibited by the composers of the fifteenth century. Meanwhile, the music of the people pursued its way independent of ecclesiastical influence. Ignored or at any rate despised by the monks, the self-elected guardians of intellectual development, it flourished wherever men had hearts to feel and voices to sing. The folk-songs of the Middle Ages, which happy accident has preserved to us,

have all the freshness, melody, and rhythmic force that the Church music of the period is so conspicuously without. Nothing can express more vividly the narrow outlook upon life of the medieval Church than the fact that this rich store of music ready to every man's hand should have been allowed, so to speak, to run to waste. Yet from time to time some holy brother, less dehumanised than his fellows, had glimpses of the musical possibilities of folk-song. In England, for instance, far back in the thirteenth century, a monk of Reading took the lovely folk-song, "Sumer is icumen in," and, with a grasp of the principles of counterpoint which for that period is nothing short of amazing, made of it a round for four voices upon a drone bass given to two voices more. He even went so far as to hallow it to the service of the Church by fitting sacred words to the music. Whether it was sung in the choir of Reading Abbey or not we cannot say, but if it was it ought certainly to have revolutionised church music on the spot, for after singing that liquid and lovely melody, harmonised with so much charm, to go back to dreary plain chant and the ear-lacerating harmonies of the "Organum" must have been, one would think, more than even a thirteenth-century monk could endure. However, both as an example of folk-song being used as the foundation of church music and as a contrapuntal triumph, "Sumer is icumen in" appears to have been an isolated phenomenon. Nothing like it of the same

period has been preserved. Certainly it cannot be taken as typical of any tendency of the time towards a more natural and truthful method of expression. In the thirteenth century the epoch of freedom was still far away. If we compare "Sumer is icumen in" with the Tournay mass, which was written about a hundred years later, we find ourselves back once more in the dismal darkness of the Middle Ages. In this mass, written for three voices by some unknown Fleming, there is very little advance on the earliest strivings towards harmonic expression of the tenth century. Hucbald's system of consecutive fourths and fifths—the so-called "Organum"—is still in full swing, and the result to our ears is indescribably hideous. But a century later came Willem Dufay, one of the most important names in the history of early music, who was a contemporary of our own Dunstable and of the Burgundian Gilles Binchois. With Dufay the influence of popular upon ecclesiastical music first takes definite shape. He wrote masses which are founded upon melodies associated with popular songs, such as "L'Homme Armé," a practice which, though it afterwards led to strange and scandalous developments, unquestionably had the immediate effect of giving life to the dry bones of church music. Further, we may note in the music of Dufay and his period a feeling for definite rhythm such as could only have been produced by the influence of popular music. Modern music was now fairly started upon its career. The generation

that succeeded Dufay, of which Ockeghem may be taken as a typical figure, had an unmistakable feeling for sheer musical beauty and, besides, we find the composers of his day actually attempting to describe the sight and sounds of Nature in terms of music. By the side of these interesting aspirations there was a disheartening tendency towards cleverness for mere cleverness' sake. Ockeghem and his fellows were never so happy as when inventing abstruse "canons" — musical puzzles which taxed the resources of the most learned to solve. Nevertheless, these exercises could not but give technical dexterity, and as a matter of fact during this period the mechanical side of music was developed to an astonishing extent. In the middle of the fifteenth century Josquin des Prés was born, the first man who can properly be called a great composer in something like the modern acceptation of the term. In Josquin's music there is a beauty which can be appreciated without any reference to the man's position in the history of music. Josquin is the first musical composer who gives a modern hearer the impression that he knows how to get the effects at which he is aiming. The purely pioneer stage of musical development is over. For the first time we are in the presence of an artist. A glance at Josquin's music reveals the importance of his position with regard to the development of modern music. He shows us for the first time a highly gifted composer consciously blending popular and ecclesiastical music. From the popular

he gets his freshness of melody and his sense of rhythm, from the ecclesiastical his knowledge of the principles of harmony and counterpoint. In his secular music, in the part songs and canzonets of which he was practically the inventor, we find what are obviously harmonised versions of popular airs, little gems of melody such as "Petite Camusette" which are as entrancing now as on the day he wrote them. And in his sacred music the popular influence is scarcely less noticeable. Let us take, for example, the "Ave Maria," which has been printed by M. Charles Bordes in his "Anthologie des Maîtres Religieux Primitifs" (*Livre des Motets*, i. 92), and compare it with a motet by Dufay or Dunstable, written only a generation earlier. Instead of the long unrhythmical sweep of the Gregorian tunes, we have short crisp phrases, sometimes treated canonically, but often harmonised in simple chords, just in the modern fashion. The motet, too, is constructed in a curiously advanced style, the flow of the piece being broken by a delightful little passage in triple time, in which the influence of popular music is unmistakable.

The importance of Josquin's work was speedily proved by the generation that succeeded him. Willaert in Venice, and Jannequin in Paris, to name only two of his pupils, carried his tradition far and wide. In England, where progress of all kind was retarded by the Wars of the Roses, the music of the early part of the sixteenth century

shows little trace of Josquin's influence, but in other European countries the iron traditions of church music began to yield at the touch of popular song. In Germany folk tunes, such as "Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen," were openly annexed by Luther and the Reformed Church, and used as hymns, a proceeding akin to that of the Salvation Army in our day. In Italy the invasion of the Netherlanders was followed by the establishment of music schools, that of Goudimel at Rome, where Palestrina was a pupil, being the most famous. At Venice Adrian Willaert is said to have introduced antiphonal writing into church music, fired thereto by the presence of two organs in St Mark's Church, of which he was organist; but it is only necessary to glance at Josquin's music, the "Ave Maria," for instance, to which reference has already been made, to find there the germs of antiphonal writing, as indeed of much else that is attributed to a later age. The sixteenth century saw the rise of the madrigal, which with its offshoots, the *canzone*, the *balletto* (the latter designed for dancing as well as singing), the *villanella*, and other delightful forms of unaccompanied vocal music, speedily gained wide popularity in Italy, and before the end of the century in England as well.

In music of this kind we find not only the most brilliant display of technique, but an ever-growing feeling for musical beauty. Allied to this was a rudimentary taste for realistic effects, taking form in an attempt to echo the sounds of nature and of

human life, at first purely imitative, as in Gombert's musical imitation of bird-calls and Jannequin's famous "Battaille de Marignan," and afterwards more artistic, as in Luca Marenzio's lovely madrigal, "Scaldava il sol," with its chirping grasshoppers, or his still more beautiful "Strider faceva," with its imitation of shepherds' pipes, or the numerous "cuckoo" pieces by English composers, in which the bird's cry is used as a definite musical motive with admirable effect.

Experiments of this kind led naturally to innovations in harmony, and long before the end of the sixteenth century composers began to be uneasy in the fetters of the modal system. The process of development which ended in the church modes being replaced by our modern key system was very gradual; in fact, it was not until the age of Bach that the older system ceased to exercise some sort of influence upon music, but by the beginning of the seventeenth century the battle was practically over. All through the sixteenth century the composers of Italy and the Netherlands were continually enlarging the borders of permissible harmony, and every innovation meant a nail in the coffin of the modal system. The increasing use of accidentals, which in the strict days of the modal system were only permitted with many restrictions, and the gradual acquisition of the principles of modulation had the result of effacing the subtle distinctions which existed between the various modes. The laws of evolution worked here as consistently as in

the animal kingdom. The fittest of the modes survived, and became the major and minor scales of the new key-system; while the others, though lingering for a while in church music, soon ceased to have any vital influence upon the development of music. The English composers of the Elizabethan age were among the hardiest innovators of the period. Not only were they continually making experiments in harmony, often with hideous if interesting results, but they appear to have been in advance of their Italian and Netherlandish contemporaries in their grasp of the principles of modulation. The attempts of Byrd and Orlando Gibbons to express the emotions of pity and terror by crude violations of the accepted rules of harmony are among the first signs of a revolt against the laws which governed the polyphonic school; while in the madrigals of Wilbye we find a consummate ease of technique and a graceful flow of modulation such as are rare even in the most accomplished Italian writers of the period, and are certainly not to be found in the productions of the Netherlandish school, at any rate before the days of Sweelinck. But in spite of the beauty of the English madrigals, it is in the sacred music of the Italian masters that we find the most perfect utterance of the time, and of all the Italians the most gifted was Palestrina, whose name stands for all that is best and purest in the music of the Church.

CHAPTER II

PALESTRINA

THE great men in the history of music can, roughly speaking, be divided into two classes, the revolutionists and the evolutionists—that is to say, those whose genius led them to exploring paths untried before, and those who summed up in their own work the various efforts and achievements of their predecessors. Viewed from a modern standpoint the development of music is like the resolution of a series of discords, each period of experiment and endeavour ending in a perfect consonance, after which progress is only possible upon a fresh path. The manifold struggles of the early composers towards a perfect method of expression culminated in Palestrina. He represents the ideal at which they had aimed. He invented little, but with the materials laboriously accumulated by generations of earnest workers he built an edifice of such faultless beauty that it still stands as a model in its kind of unapproachable perfection.

Little is known of Palestrina's birth and upbringing, and even of his later life only meagre records survive. The position of a musician in the sixteenth century was very different from what it is now. Palestrina was by universal consent the

PALESTRINA

greatest composer of his time, yet his position during the greater part of his life was little more exalted than that of a servant. The brilliant company of warriors and churchmen who thronged the corridors of the Vatican would have smiled if they had been told that to touch the garment of the poor Maestro di Cappella was the greatest honour to which they could aspire. Palestrina received all the honours that at that time could fall to the lot of a musician. Of his greatest mass a pope said that it was some such music that the Apostle John heard sung by the angelic chorus around the throne of God. Cardinals complimented him in the words of Dante, and he had a saint for confessor and friend. But his honours were barren so far as worldly wealth was concerned. At the time of his greatest prosperity he was earning a bare thirty scudi a month, and he left little but unpublished manuscripts to the scapegrace of a son who survived him. So little interest did the man, apart from his music, arouse in the world in which he lived, that no one troubled to write his biography until he had been dead for over two hundred years. Thus the materials for constructing a living portrait of the man are of the scantiest. We must learn to know him in his music, or not at all.

It is probable that he was born in the town of Palestrina in or about the year 1526. His father was a well-to-do farmer, and the house in which he was born is still standing. Nothing is known of his childhood. Probably his musical instinct drew him to Rome at an early age. There is a pretty story that

he was heard singing in the Roman streets by the organist of Santa Maria Maggiore. It may be so, though it is recorded that as a man he had a poor voice. It is certain, at any rate, that he received his musical education at the hands of Gaudio Mell, a Netherlander, usually called Goudimel, who had come south and established a school of music in Rome. Palestrina was an apt pupil, and in 1544 he was appointed organist of the cathedral of his native town, where he remained for seven years. At that time most of the music sung in Italy was written by Netherlandish immigrants, and it is significant that Palestrina's first collection of masses, published in 1554, was the first book of music dedicated by an Italian to a pope. When he produced this work Palestrina was choirmaster in the Cappella Giulia of the Vatican. His music pleased Pope Julius III., and in spite of the fact that he was a layman, a married man and a bad singer, he was appointed to the Pontifical Choir. Julius III. died in the same year, and Marcellus II., who succeeded him, died after a reign of twenty-three days. Paul IV., the next pope, seems to have shared the general belief that a good voice is at least as essential a part of a chorister's equipment as fine musicianship, and he turned Palestrina into the streets with a pension of six scudi a month. Palestrina was soon appointed to the choirmastership of the Lateran, and it is a noteworthy indication of his pecuniary position that he took care to ascertain that his acceptance of the post would not entail the loss of his pension. It is not necessary

to follow Palestrina through his various changes of occupation, which affected in no way his career as a composer. It must suffice to say that in 1571 he was appointed Maestro di Cappella at St Peter's, a post which he retained during the reigns of seven pontiffs until the day of his death. The turning-point in his life came in the year 1563. The Council of Trent which was sitting at the time had turned its attention to the question of church music. The abuses then prevalent had reached a pitch which called for drastic reformation. In the hands of the Flemings the worship of mere technique had reached extravagant limits. Composers thought of nothing but devising new methods of displaying their own cleverness. For the spirit of the words which they set they cared not at all. The practice, healthy in its inception as we have seen, and provocative of important results in the development of music, of using popular tunes as the basis of sacred music had been carried to untoward lengths. Not only the tunes, but even the words of popular songs had found their way into the services of the Church. While one section of the choir was engaged in singing the words of the mass, another would be shouting a nonsense refrain of "Alleluja" or "Angelus," and another the ribald strains of the popular song upon which the mass, musically speaking, was founded. Even when this grossest abuse was absent, the music was rarely anything but a display of meaningless and inappropriate counterpoint, little tending to induce

devotional feelings in the minds of a pious congregation. So strong was the feeling in favour of sweeping reform that there was a powerful party in the Council in favour of abjuring polyphonic music altogether for church purposes, and returning to the unadorned plain chant of the Middle Ages. But there was another party which was determined not to give up polyphonic music without a struggle, and at the instance of Cardinals Borromeo and Vitellozzi, Palestrina was requested to compose a mass which, if accepted, might serve as a type of what the church music of the future should be. Palestrina composed not one mass but three, the greatest of which, the "Missa Papæ Marcelli," was performed under the auspices of the cardinal, and made so deep an impression upon all who heard it that the future of polyphonic music was assured. This is the story as given by Baini, Palestrina's first biographer, but it is only fair to the reader to point out that the laborious results of modern research tend to discredit many of the details. I am, however, inclined to look upon Baini's account as true in a higher sense than that of mere fact. The story, as it reached Baini, represented in a compact form the respective attitudes towards music of Palestrina, the Cardinals, and the Council of Trent, as interpreted by the united common-sense of seven generations of mankind. The massed experience of mankind is the one safe guide vouchsafed to us in our walk through this vale of tears, and this particular story, whether apocryphal or not, has won the imprimatur

of the ages. I have little doubt that some generations hence a critic will arise who will prove by documentary evidence that the story, let us say for example, of Bishop Stubbs and his "Bradshaw," has no foundation in fact. I only hope that his contemporaries will be wise enough to reply that the story was accepted by those who knew the Bishop as an admirably complete exposition of his attitude towards life, and as such it is truer than if it had actually happened. For a true story may easily give a very false idea of its subject, whereas an untrue one, having no evidence to back it up, lives only by virtue of its intrinsic truthfulness, and the fact that it has survived at all is the best reason for our accepting it.

Whatever were the facts of the case, Palestrina's mass was accepted by everyone as a model of what church music should be, and for the rest of his life he enjoyed such honour as could fall to the lot of the unquestioned prince of living composers. The "Missa Papæ Marcelli" is generally spoken of as his masterpiece on account of the circumstances of its composition, but of the ninety-five masses attributed to him many others are at least as fine, while among the almost innumerable motets, hymns and offertories which he composed, there are countless gems of the purest water.

Palestrina lived, as I have said, before the days of biographies and interviews, and barely a tradition remains to us of the man in his habit as he lived. But his character is written in his music in

unmistakable terms. Even if it were not known that he was dear to the saintly Philip Neri, in whose arms he died, his works would proclaim him a man of exquisite tenderness and of child-like simplicity. It is a pet theory of certain critics of the present day that the character of a man has nothing to do with the quality of his work. Morals being to a certain extent a matter of chronology and latitude, it is plainly conceivable that a sixteenth century Italian should be from a modern point of view the reverse of respectable and yet compose sacred music of complete sincerity, but it is safe to say that no one does well what he does not do with his whole heart. In the time of Palestrina the Church of Rome was the chief patron of painting and music, and painters and musicians alike were summoned to devote their principal energies to her glorification; but it is only necessary to compare, let us say, the works of Palestrina and Perugino to realise the difference between work done for the glory of God and work done for the glory of man. Even if we knew nothing whatever of the men it would be impossible not to recognise the fact that Palestrina was working with his heart and Perugino with his head. Both had the same mastery of technique, but the one wrote with an overflowing enthusiasm born of love to God and man, and the other painted for the purpose of making money and of exhibiting his own executive ability to the best advantage.

In the history of music Palestrina represents the

culmination of the polyphonic school of vocal music. His work has that complete maturity beyond which all progress is decay. He wrote no instrumental music, no music for a solo voice. He had not a touch of that revolutionary impulse which drives men upon new paths. He worked only with existing materials, but he brought music as he knew it to the highest conceivable point of perfection. His earlier works show strong traces of the Netherlandish influences under which he was educated; some of them have to the full the futile ingenuity which was characteristic of the school. But as his powers developed he found the secret of the true balance between science and expression. He learnt how to disguise his enormous erudition under a cloak of apparent simplicity. In Palestrina we first find the melodious suavity which has since become typical of Italian music. The roughness and crudity which is characteristic of even the greatest Netherlanders is softened in Palestrina to an even flow of delicate harmony. The difference in this respect between Palestrina and his great contemporary Orlando di Lasso is very marked. Lasso is often bolder in his harmonic devices, but there is an experimental feeling in much of his music which is not found in the mellow perfection of Palestrina. From a modern point of view Palestrina worked within very narrow limits, but within those limits his command of expression was extraordinary. Such discords as he employed are of the mildest description, and are always carefully prepared, but

the effect that they make is extraordinary. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that no more poignantly pathetic setting of the "Stabat Mater" than Palestrina's has ever been written, yet the harmonies employed are almost child-like in their simplicity. It is the perfect proportion of part to whole that is one of the secrets of Palestrina's power, and the perfect adjustment of means to end.

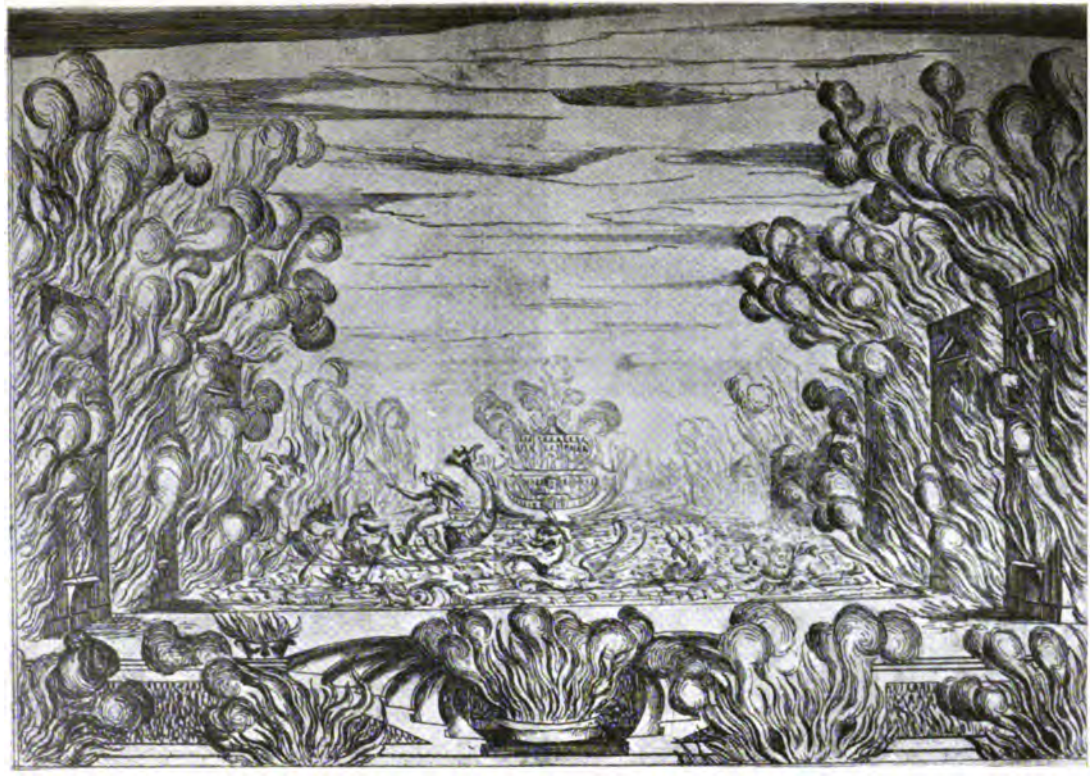
Nothing is more difficult than to describe music and the impressions produced by music in terms of plain prose, and the music of Palestrina in particular is of so delicate a fibre that it is almost impossible to find words in which to paint its distinctive charm. The prevailing note of it is its intense spirituality. Not a touch of earth degrades its celestial rapture. It voices the highest and purest mysticism of the Catholic faith as it never has been voiced before or since. Palestrina seems to view the mysteries of the Christian religion through a golden haze. Its external aspects were nothing to him, its inner meaning everything. The gross materialism of a later day, which emphasises the physical side of Christ's passion, would have been inexpressibly repugnant to him could he have conceived it. His music is inextricably bound up with the words to which it is allied and the acts of adoration which it illustrates. Apart from the services of the Church it loses its essential meaning, but in its proper sphere it still stands as the exemplar of ultimate perfection.

CHAPTER III

THE SECULARISATION OF MUSIC

THE opening of the seventeenth century saw a revolution in music such as has never since been paralleled. With Palestrina and his school music, as it then was known, reached a climax of perfection beyond which progress was scarcely conceivable. But the productions of this school, though perfect in degree, were narrow in kind. The church musicians of the sixteenth century, with all their highly-wrought technique, worked in a restricted field. The genius of their age tended to expansion and discovery. The result was unavoidable, though it came, as it seems to us, with strange suddenness. Leaving behind them, as it were, the gorgeous palace, so carefully erected by generations of earnest workers, the new generation of musicians set forth boldly upon an unknown and stormy ocean, in craft ill-built and without rudder or compass. That in time they arrived at the wished-for port was due certainly to no care or forethought on their part, but rather to the happy genius of the Italian race for adapting itself to circumstances and circumstances to itself. As a matter of fact the revolution was by no means so sudden or so drastic as it now appears to us. In spite of the

new departure which music took in the early years of the seventeenth century, the old school lived on under the wing of the Church for many years, at first untouched by the revolutionary ideas of secular composers and afterwards only gradually affected by them. But the rise of opera, of instrumental music, and in fact of secular music as a separate entity gave a new complexion to the whole world of music. The circumstances of the new departure would surprise us were they not repeated in almost every revolution of the kind. The founders of the secular school were resolved to make an entirely fresh start. Their primitive efforts owed nothing to the work of their predecessors. They had ready to hand a musical organisation of exquisite complexity and consummate finish. They ignored it altogether. For all the influence that he exerted upon Peri and Cavalieri, Palestrina might never have existed. The little band of Florentines who set themselves to create the new music worked as if unconscious that a thousand years of development lay behind them. They had no science and no experience. Their first strivings after expression are pathetically ineffective. By the side of the majestic oratory of Palestrina their works appear like the incomprehensible gibberish of childhood. Yet the truth was in them, and from the humble germ that they planted sprang one of the noblest developments of music. But before the fathers of opera were justified of their offspring, a weary path of experiment had to be



ITALIAN OPERA IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

SCENE FROM "LA LIBERAZIONE DI RUGGIERO"

traversed. Unlike many sister forms of art, opera had to work out its own salvation. Printing and oil-painting sprang full-grown from birth. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the first book printed, the Mazarin Bible, and the first picture painted in oils, Van Eyck's "Adoration of the Lamb" for beauty of conception and perfection of execution have never been surpassed; but it was many years before opera became even articulate; even now, after three hundred years of incessant development, it is legitimate to believe that the zenith of its achievement has not yet been reached.

Opera, like so many other things, owed its foundation largely to accident. Late in the sixteenth century a small band of Florentine enthusiasts proposed to themselves the task of reviving the lost glories of Greek drama. Nothing was farther from their thoughts than the creation of a new art-form. They worked upon what they believed to be antiquarian lines; they wrote plays, and because they fancied that the Greek drama was sung or rather chanted in a kind of accompanied recitative, they decided to perform their plays in the same way. Their first efforts, such as Peri's "Euridice," which was performed in 1600 on the occasion of Henry IV.'s marriage to Maria dei Medici, and Caccini's work of the same name, have very little musical value. They are almost entirely set to a bare monotonous recitative, varied at rare intervals by simple passages of choral writing and short instrumental interludes. From beginning to end there

is nothing that can be called a tune, and the accompaniment merely supports the voice by occasional chords contributed by a harpsichord and three instruments of the lute type.

In the same year another attempt was made at finding a new method of musical expression, which was destined to have results fully as important as that of Peri and Caccini. In 1600 Cavalieri produced the first oratorio, "La Rappresentazione di Anima e di Corpo," which was performed at Rome in the Oratory of St Philip Neri. In general structure Cavalieri's work resembles that of his Florentine contemporaries, but it has decidedly more musical interest. The solo parts and the choruses are more expressive, and the instrumental sections are considerably more elaborate. Unfortunately Cavalieri died in the year in which his oratorio was produced, and little attempt seems to have been made to follow up his initial success until the time of Carissimi, whose oratorios are an interesting attempt to graft the new dramatic style upon the rich and solid polyphony of past ages. At Florence, on the other hand, the seed fell upon good ground. Several composers arose who produced works conceived upon the lines suggested by Peri, but no definite advance can be traced until the appearance on the scene of Claudio Monteverde.

Monteverde was the first trained musician who devoted himself to the new music. He had been thoroughly grounded in the traditions of the contrapuntal school. He had written madrigals

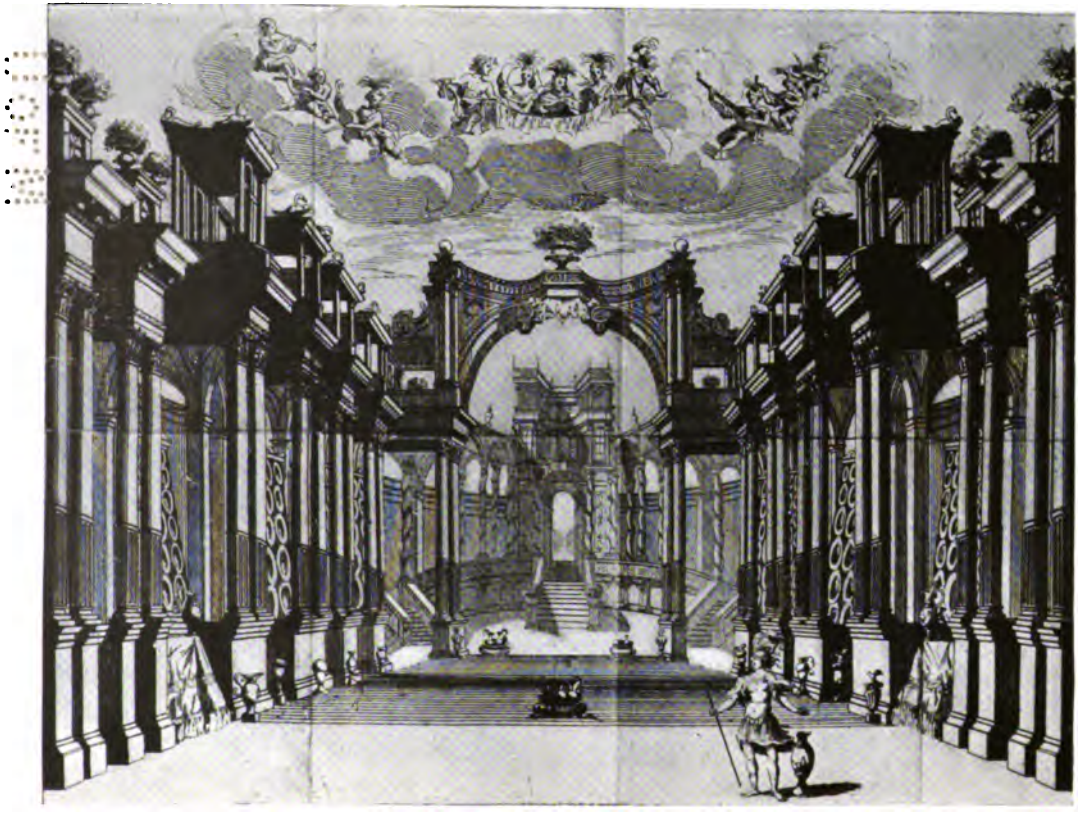
and church music in the manner of Palestrina, though even in these there are many traces of a desire to overstep the narrow boundaries within which composers of that epoch were cabined and confined. He was also an accomplished instrumentalist, having played for many years in the Duke of Mantua's private band. He was thus equipped for conquest in a manner to which his predecessors in the new field could lay no claim, and when his chance came he was able at once to put a fresh complexion upon the prospects of opera. It is only necessary to glance at the score of Monteverde's "Orfeo," the principal work of his which is available for study in an edition accessible to English students, to realise how great was the step that he made from the first tentative efforts of the Florentine amateurs. Their few tinkling lutes have given place to an orchestra of viols, contrabassi, organ, harpsichord, chitarroni, flutes, cornetti, and trumpets—in fact, strings, wood and brass complete —used with a surprising instinct for instrumental effect; their shapeless dialogue is transformed into often highly expressive recitative rising at times almost to the dignity of an aria; their childish harmonies are superseded by novel and daring experiments in discord, which, though they may sound ordinary enough to ears trained upon Richard Strauss, must have made the hair of conservative musicians in those days stand upon end. When we consider what Monteverde actually accomplished, how, working with practically no models, he pro-

duced a new art-form, founded upon a convention till then unknown to the world, how he equipped it with a new theory of harmony, a new method of vocal writing and a new system of orchestration, we cannot but admit that his was one of the greatest creative intellects that the world of art has ever known. But something must be said for the people of his own day, for the audiences which made his success possible. Had he fallen upon a dull, pedantic era like our own, when everything that has a tinge of novelty in it is hooted and derided by a compact phalanx of Philistines sworn to the extermination of all that ventures beyond the radius of their own bleared eyesight, he would have accomplished little or nothing. Fortunately for him he was born into an age of life and movement, an age when men's minds turned lightly to things new and beautiful. The Renaissance and the Reformation had struck blows from which the Church was still reeling. Old links were shattered, old formulas cast aside. The air throbbed with the passion of revolt. A new spring-time had burst upon the world. Just at the right moment a fortunate appointment drew Monteverde to Venice, of all the cities in Italy the most favourable for his work. The Venetians, among whom his lot was cast for the last thirty years of his life, were the Athenians of their time. In music and painting they had been the leaders of Italy for the best part of a century. Their quick wit, their restless ingenuity, their love of variety were proverbial. They welcomed the new art with

open arms. In the old days when music was still imprisoned in the fetters of ecclesiasticism, Venetian composers had taught her to fling aside her chains and dance to popular airs in their *villanelle*, *balletti* and *frottole*. Monteverde's definite secularisation of music had no terrors for them. They had loved colour in painting and architecture; they loved it no less in music. Monteverde's strange new harmonies, so passionate in their beauty compared to the placid flow of sexless spirituality in mass and motet, his wonderful orchestration with its ever-changing combinations of instruments, opened fresh worlds of enchantment to their delighted ears. Venice speedily became the home of opera. At first Monteverde's works were given only at festivals celebrated by princely houses, but the people had not long to wait. Late in his life-time, in 1637, the first public opera-house was opened in Venice, and before the century closed, the city possessed no fewer than eleven theatres devoted to the performance of opera alone.

Monteverde's success soon found him followers. Of these Cavalli is one of the most famous. Cavalli's operas show a decided advance in the matter of form upon Monteverde's. When composers heard their works performed they naturally soon found out not only which musical devices were effective, and which were not, but also which the audience seemed to prefer. It is hardly fair to say of Cavalli, as has been said by various critics, that in his music can be traced the first inclination of a com-

poser to write down to his public. In his works, as in the later operas of Monteverde, we begin to pass from the first merely experimental stage of opera. Cavalli avoids the pitfalls into which Monteverde's inexperience had led him, but on the other hand his music has not the concentrated dramatic force of his predecessor. Still Cavalli is an important figure in the history of music. In his operas we find for the first time a regularly developed aria, varying the monotony of the interminable recitative. He had the true Venetian love of colour, and he tried to make his orchestra give musical significance to the sights and sounds of nature, such as the murmuring of rivers or the sighing of the winds. Cesti was another of Monteverde's most famous followers. In his time, towards the end of the century, opera had advanced still farther on the path of development. Cesti's music is tuneful and charming, and many of his airs would probably be as successful now in pleasing public taste as on the day they were written. In his works we find for the first time the *da capo* regularly used, that is to say the repetition of the first part of an air after the end of the second part. Excellent as this invention was in giving cohesion to the musical fabric of an opera, it was much abused by subsequent writers, and is largely responsible for the degradation of opera in the eighteenth century to the level of a concert on the stage. In Cesti's time the rivalry between the various opera-houses of Venice was very keen, and



SCENE FROM "IL FAVORE DEGLI DEI," BY SABADINI

PERFORMED IN THE FARNESE THEATRE, PARMA

it is easy to believe that the managers tried to outbid each other in the favour of the public by staging their pieces in the most magnificent manner. At any rate the accounts of the scenery used sound very elaborate. Operas were still an important feature at court festivals, and here, as in the court masques in England, gorgeous staging was a matter of course. Engravings still survive of the scenery used when Cesti's opera, "Il Pomo d' Oro," was produced at Vienna in 1668, which give some idea of the elaborate nature of the entertainment. At Parma the old theatre still stands in the Farnese palace, just as it did in the seventeenth century, but in such a wrecked and dismantled condition that it is not easy to realise what it looked like in all the splendour of a court festival. Nevertheless those who have visited Parma, and have read the accounts that survive of the magnificent performances which were there given under the auspices of the Farnese family, can well amuse themselves by trying to recreate the scene in imagination.

It would serve no good purpose to enumerate the composers who, during the seventeenth century, furnished Italy with operas. Their name is legion. Throughout the country the musical activity was amazing. Hardly a town was without its opera-house, and the libraries of Italian cities furnish convincing proofs of the enormous quantity of music produced at this period. What may be called the first period of Italian opera culminated in Alessandro Scarlatti, a composer of extraordinary

genius and fertility, who definitely established the form of Italian opera which prevailed during the eighteenth century. Scarlatti found opera still to some extent in the tentative stage; he left it a highly-developed art-form of exquisitely ordered proportion, an instrument capable of expressing human emotion with beautiful certainty and force. Historians, noting the fact that after Scarlatti's day Italian opera soon degenerated into a concert upon the stage with little or no dramatic significance, have found in his works the seeds of decadence, and have not hesitated to describe Monteverde's primitive struggles after expression as more "dramatic" than the ordered beauty of Scarlatti's airs, without seeing that the germs of all that Scarlatti accomplished are to be found in Monteverde, though often in so undeveloped a state as to be barely recognisable. It is a common error, especially among those whose knowledge of music is bounded by the works of Wagner, to suppose that the duty of operatic composers is to give musical expression to the ordinary inflections of the human voice. This is entirely to misread the convention upon which opera is founded. When song has been substituted for speech, realism of this kind is out of the question. Music like architecture depends for its effect upon the beauty of ordered design and proportion. The man who built the first log-cabin probably took as his model the cave in which his ancestors had dwelt, but we do not therefore judge houses according to their

resemblance to caves. It probably required a greater effort of creative genius to build the first log-cabin than to build Westminster Abbey, but that does not prevent us from regarding Westminster Abbey as the finer work of art. Monteverde was a man of extraordinary genius, and the value of his work in the history of modern music cannot be over-estimated, but to speak of his music as a great artistic accomplishment is to misunderstand the man and his aims altogether. He would have written like Scarlatti if he could. His career shows a constant striving towards that goal. Anyone who compares his later works, such as "Il Ritorno d' Ulisse," with "Orfeo," must see the enormous advance in form which he made during his life-time. But the tendencies of modern opera towards formlessness and so-called "dramatic truth" and "realism" have blinded critics to the main principles upon which opera is founded, so that a distinguished modern writer actually talks about Monteverde "regarding his early efforts in the histrionic and dramatic direction as a forlorn hope," and says that Cavalli "drifted away from his dramatic ideals in the direction of technical artistic finish and clearness of musical form," as though a dramatic ideal could be better expressed by imperfect than by perfect technique, by chaotic confusion than by assured mastery of form. If critics of this type condescended to be logical they would see in Monteverde's music a sad falling off from the "dramatic ideal" of Peri, for Monteverde's technique

has infinitely more "artistic finish" than that of his predecessor, while so far as form goes there are even in "Orfeo" unmistakable suggestions of an aria, which presumably we are bound to consider a step downwards from Peri's merely "dramatic" recitative.

Scarlatti carried opera in Italy to heights far beyond the ken of his predecessors, but meanwhile further developments of the new art were claiming attention beyond the Alps. Lulli brought Italian traditions to Paris, where he grafted them upon the masques which already were popular at the French court. Lulli was an extremely clever man, and he speedily divined the instincts of the French people in musical matters, and suited his music to their peculiar taste. In Italy the trend of opera was more and more in the direction of sheer musical beauty, regardless of the meaning of the words, but the logical French mind insisted upon knowing what the music was all about, thus we find that recitative retains an important place in Lulli's operas while set airs are few and far between.

Vocalisation was far less cultivated in France than in Italy, and long after Lulli's time French singers were famous for their ugly voices and bad singing. Dancing, on the other hand, for which the Italians seem to have cared comparatively little, was much appreciated in France, and elaborate ballets are a prominent feature of Lulli's operas. Thus in Lulli's hands French opera soon developed into a distinctive art form, very stiff and majestic compared

with the melodious and flexible music of Italian writers, but vigorous and intelligent, and lending itself well to the elaborate stage display in which the French then as now delighted. Historically, Lulli is interesting, too, as having, if not invented, at any rate perfected what is known as the French form of overture, a solemn introduction followed by a quick movement in a fugal style and concluding with a dance, which was afterwards carried to the highest conceivable pitch of perfection by Handel.

In Germany the development of opera was comparatively unimportant. The wars of the seventeenth century interfered with the progress of all kinds of art, and though performances of opera were occasionally given at German courts, the new art took no real root in the country, until the opening of the Hamburg opera-house in 1678 and the rise of Keiser. Even then operas were given mainly in Italian, and the style of the music was for the most part thoroughly Italian, though occasionally modified by German influence in minor details. The development of the new music in England deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER IV

PURCELL

AT no time in its history was English music without distinctive features which marked it off from the music of other countries, and as the methods of the old polyphonic school gave place to monody these differences became more obvious. The music of sixteenth century composers, whether Italian, English or Flemish, looks very much alike to a casual observer. It is only after a certain amount of study that the difference in aim and method in the work of, let us say, Byrd and Palestrina becomes manifest; but not the veriest tyro could mistake Purcell's music for Scarlatti's. The reason for this lies upon the surface. In Italy, as we have seen, the rise of the new style in music followed immediately upon an attempt to revive the Greek drama, and was necessarily influenced by dramatic methods. We may feel quite sure that even if Peri and Cavalieri had never existed, Monteverde would have left his mark upon music in some way or other; but it would very likely have been in a way quite different from that which he actually followed. Peri's "Euridice" drew him in the direction of opera, and the influence of that work undoubtedly did much to guide Monteverde

PURCELL

Mail

in the choice of the form of his first works. Later he "drifted" (as the distinguished critic already referred to terms it) or progressed (as I should be inclined to say) from the influence of Greek drama in the direction of a more definitely musical form, in which, as we have seen, he was followed by Cavalli, Cesti and other composers, until in the hands of Scarlatti opera assumed a form proper to itself, and was finally emancipated from the idea of imitating Greek drama.

In England the influences at work were different. We had no opera, and therefore our music was never coloured by any attempt to imitate Greek drama. But we had masques, and they did much towards laying down the lines upon which English music was to move. The masques which were so popular at the courts of the early Stuart kings had nothing dramatic about them, save in so far as they were performed upon the stage. They were purely fantastic in style, and made no attempt to picture life in any way. As a rule the different scenes of which they were composed had very little in common, and the music which was written to accompany them had no pretensions to dramatic unity. Thus the composers who wrote the music were not required to produce anything like a connected work. Their music was essentially lyrical, and was founded largely upon the popular music which, as we have seen, had always existed by the side of the elaborate contrapuntal school of earlier generations. Many of

the songs in the masques of Campion, the brothers Lawes and other composers of the Stuart period are charming in their simple way, and are infinitely more satisfying as music than the songs produced by Caccini and his followers in Italy, which, aiming at a false dramatic ideal, missed their aim altogether. As time went on English composers grew more ambitious and more experienced in writing for the stage, but even in pieces like Locke's "Psyche" and Banister's "Circe" (if indeed the latter is Banister's and not an early work of Purcell's) which date from about 1675, though the music is infinitely more elaborate than anything of the Lawes period and has a good deal of descriptive and pictorial energy, it is in essence lyrical rather than dramatic.

The accession of Charles II. gave a new impulse to music. Hitherto the old polyphonic style, though banished from the stage and the home-circle by the new monodic music, still lingered on in churches. But Charles, whose musical taste was formed in Paris, had no stomach for anthems of the old sort. He was no musician, but he knew what he liked. He wanted music, even in church, with a lilt in it—something that he could beat time to with his hand. So Pelham Humphreys, a clever choir-boy who had already shown a taste for composition, was sent over to Paris to pick up all that he could of the new methods of composition which had been brought into favour by Lulli. Young Humphreys came back thoroughly Frenchi-

fied in manners and sympathies, and proceeded to write anthems in which the style of Lulli's operas is grafted upon English methods with very interesting results. Charming as the songs of the earlier Stuart composers were, their attempts at recitative had always been feeble, a sufficient proof of how far more easily lyrical expression came to Englishmen than dramatic. Humphreys' Parisian studies strengthened him vastly in his treatment of recitative, as a glance at his beautiful anthem, "Hear, O Heavens," one of the very few of his works which is still occasionally performed, will show. But Humphreys died too young to show what stuff he really had in him. It was left to his pupil, Henry Purcell, to bring to perfection the fruits of the marriage between the French and English schools.

Purcell is justly termed the glory of English music, but he is a singularly difficult composer to discuss fairly. I often feel sorry for earnest students who, after reading the glowing eulogies showered upon Purcell by historians, turn to his works and find in them so much that is puerile, ineffective and absurd that they give up the composer and his eulogists, bag and baggage, as a set of humbugs. To appreciate Purcell properly it is necessary to take a historical standpoint, to realise the difficulties with which he had to contend, the lack of sympathy which he found in his contemporaries, and the meagre materials with which he had to work. So far as sheer invention goes, Purcell must rank with the

greatest composers of all time. Where he falls below the highest standard is in his inability to give his ideas proper treatment, in his lack of the sense of proportion, in his deficiency in the architectonic side of music—to sum him up in a word, in his provinciality. If we take all the circumstances in which he worked into consideration the wonder is, not that he accomplished so little, but that he accomplished so much. However our patriotism may hesitate to admit it, England in Purcell's time was a veritable *ultima Thule* as regards music. Music, having broken with the old polyphonic tradition, was feeling her way about in the twilight dawn of a new day. Everything was tentative and experimental. The period is intensely interesting for a twentieth-century student, but it was as unpropitious as it could possibly be for the development of a great genius. Had Purcell been born at a time when a regularly established school was in being, or even had he been supported by an appreciable body of cultivated taste, his work would have been very different from what it was. But in his time there were no recognised musical standards to work by. Every man thought for himself, wrote for himself, and judged for himself. There was no one to show him his faults. He was, and must have known perfectly well that he was, a far greater man than any of his contemporaries. His master, Dr Blow, tacitly admitted it, by resigning his place as organist of Westminster Abbey in his pupil's favour. This

alone was bad for him. Then from his earliest years he was successful. He was a juvenile prodigy. When he was a choir boy, he composed anthems which the king praised. He wrote a song when he was in his teens which was published in a popular collection. He was a singer too—his "incredible graces" exciting the admiration of all who heard him—and this tended to vanity, and his manners were so charming that everyone fell in love with him. Naturally he was exceedingly well satisfied with himself, and probably soon got to think that he was beyond criticism, and that his world ought to be very grateful for anything he chose to give it. Now if he had been well snubbed as a boy, if he had had to work hard under some prosy old pedant with his head stuffed full of musty traditions, if he had begun his career with a few thorough-going failures, how much better it would have been for him! But he was what he was, and we must be thankful for him as he is. Nothing would have checked his astonishing power of invention; but the sense of having to live up to the standard of a great past, the knowledge of there being a tribunal of cultivated men to appeal to would have fired him to put nothing but his very best into what he wrote. What he needed above all was an artistic environment, an atmosphere of high thought and intellectual striving—instead of the debauched sensualism of the Restoration.

Purcell's work falls naturally into three main

divisions: his church music, his theatre music, and his instrumental works. In all three he is far ahead of all the other men of his time, so far as intrinsic excellence is concerned, but he has not the consistent elevation of style of Lulli, nor the clear-cut elegance and suave grace of the best Italians. In his anthems he derives directly from Pelham Humphreys, who, as we have seen, learnt a great deal from Lulli; but Purcell developed the new style of church music, and blended with it some of the grandeur and dignity of the old polyphonic masters. Sometimes he recalls the rich solidity of Orlando Gibbons, as in his settings of the liturgical services, or in the famous "Remember not," though here his novel and beautiful harmonies import a curious flavour of modernity into the time-honoured devices. But for the most part his church music is of what may be called the Restoration type, in which passages for solo voices, duets and trios abound, and the share of the chorus is reduced to a minimum. His anthems are strangely unequal. Many of them are written in the jigging jog-trot style which Charles II. liked, because he could beat time to it; others are defaced by the taste of the time for quaint musical conceits, as in the famous "They that go down to the sea in ships," which opens with a scale passage for a bass voice descending to the double D, or the curious "They hold all together and keep themselves close," in which the voices gradually draw

closer and closer together till they end upon one and the same note. In others again the search for new methods of expression is carried to childish extremes, and in nearly all the form is loose and slovenly to an unpardonable extent. But there is hardly one that has not some illuminating flash of genius, some point of intense musical beauty that only a master could have devised. One of the most expressive is "Who hath believed our report?" an anthem now rarely if ever performed, in which Purcell traverses the ground subsequently covered by Handel in "The Messiah." No severer test for Purcell could be conceived than to compare his setting of "He was despised," "Surely he hath borne our griefs," and the rest of the familiar words with Handel's; but different in every way as the earlier master's music is, for nobility of inspiration, for dignity and pathos of expression, it can hardly be put upon a lower level than the world-famous music of Handel.

In a different vein, but one strikingly characteristic of another side of Purcell's genius, is his exquisite spring-song, "My beloved spake," an anthem brimming over with bright melody and exquisite sympathy with nature. Never have the freshness and the sweet unrest of Spring been set to music of a more liquid melodiousness than the passage in which Purcell sings of the fig-tree putting forth her leaves, and of the vines with their tender grapes that give a good smell. The

anthem as a whole suffers somewhat from the "scrappiness" of the form, but the isolated passages of which it is composed are incomparably beautiful, and strike a note that hitherto had rarely been heard in music.

In a manner allied to that of his anthems, but, as a rule, of greater elaboration, are the many odes which Purcell composed for state and private celebrations. Odes were the fashion of the day, and whether St Cecilia's day was to be celebrated according to the jovial custom of the time, or London Yorkshiremen met for their annual feast, or the King returned to his capital from Newmarket, or the Queen fancied that she was going to have a baby, the occasion required musical celebration. The words of these odes are usually the most dismal pieces of hack-work imaginable, but Purcell generally found something in them to fire his genius. The choral parts of these works are often singularly rich and imposing, and are usually more fully developed than in the anthems. One of the best of Purcell's odes, that written in 1692 for St Cecilia's Day, has been performed in recent years. It is particularly interesting to anyone who wants to understand how Purcell stands in the history of musical development. It shows at once his strength and his weakness in the most unmistakable manner, his brilliant inventive powers, his splendid ideas, and his inability to put them to a proper use. In the instrumental introduction there is a wonderfully

expressive slow movement by the side of an allegro which has very little more musical value than the din made by two children with a drum and a tin trumpet. The same contrasts run through the whole work. Some of the solos are dry musical exercises upon a ground bass, with not the faintest pretence of having anything to do with the words; others are equally meaningless displays of florid "graces," which, we are told, impressed the audience of that time amazingly. By the side of these are passages of charming melody, and others of astonishing spirit and energy. One of the choruses is Handelian in its sonorous breadth and majesty, another, save for the accompaniment, might almost be a madrigal by Wilbye or Weelkes. All through the work there is the same hovering between various styles, the same lack of *parti pris*. It is this curious inequality in Purcell's music that makes it at once so fascinating and so disappointing. At one moment he lifts you to the stars, and the next he dashes you down to earth. It is perhaps in his music for the theatre that he is most consistently excellent. The chronology of Purcell's career has not been definitely ascertained, but during the latter part of it he seems to have been the regular conductor at the theatre in Dorset Garden, and to have supplied all the pieces presented there with such incidental music as they required. So far as is known he wrote music for more than fifty plays; in some cases only

a song or two as in the case of "Abdelazer" or "Epsom Wells"; in others such as "King Arthur" and "Dioclesian," an important score fully as elaborate as the operas that were then being performed in France and Italy. Only once in his career did he write a real opera, a drama without spoken dialogue, sung from beginning to end, and that was for a performance at a girls' school.

It was thought for many years that "Dido and Æneas," the work in question, was written when Purcell was only twenty years old, but Mr Barclay Squire's recent researches have proved pretty conclusively that it dates from a much later period of the composer's career. It is, at any rate, both in its strength and weakness a good specimen of Purcell's dramatic music, though it is perhaps to be regretted that its form and its adaptability for performance should have thrust it forward of late to the exclusion of works at least as fine, such as "The Fairy Queen" and "Dioclesian." A great deal of it is childishly helpless, and the music, so far as it expresses anything, only expresses the composer's entire inability to express anything at all. But here and there are wonderful passages, which give as complete a proof of Purcell's natural genius as anything he ever wrote. The close of the opera with Dido's famous death-song and the tender little chorus of Cupids is inexpressibly touching, and there is a curious note of weird horror in the witch music. Purcell is always successful with the

OPERA IN ENGLAND IN PURCELL'S TIME

SCENE FROM SETTLE'S "EMPRESS OF MOROCCO"

supernatural. He was evidently a man of very strong though uncontrolled imagination, and scenes such as these in "Dido" and the marvellous ghost scene in "The Massacre of Paris," and the interview between Saul and the witch of Endor which he set as a separate work seem to have appealed to one side of it with irresistible force.

The reception of Purcell's one opera did not encourage him to repeat the experiment. The taste of the day did not demand purely musical pieces. The convention upon which opera is founded, the substitution of song for speech, has never appealed to Englishmen as a nation, and from Purcell's day to our own opera has always been an exotic in this country. The incidental music which Purcell produced with such amazing fertility during his later years is rather a development of the earlier masque music of Lawes and his fellows than of opera as it flourished in France or Italy. Lawes's school sprang directly from the popular music of the country, not from any endeavour to give musical semblance to dramatic dialogue; and Purcell, with infinitely greater knowledge and inspiration, followed in Lawes's footsteps. Purcell's melody is thoroughly English in type and contour; it owes nothing to any foreign influence. In the details of musical structure he no doubt owed a good deal to France if not to Italy. From Pelham Humphreys Purcell undoubtedly learnt a good deal about French music, and in all probability the scores of Lulli's operas, which were published as

soon as they were produced, found their way to England. It is interesting to trace, as in some cases we can, how an idea travelled from one country to another. In 1667 Cesti's "Pomo d' Oro" was produced in Vienna; in it there occurs a shuddering chorus—probably a kind of *bouche fermée* effect—expressive of the terror of the people at the threats of Pallas. In 1677 came Lulli's "Isis" with its "Chœur de Peuples des Climats Glacés" in which the same device is used to express agonies of cold, and this was copied by Purcell in 1691 in the frost scene in his "King Arthur." But though one can point to occasional passages like this, which betray external influence, as a whole Purcell's theatre music is remarkably original. In all the essential qualities of great music it is singularly strong. It has inexhaustible melody, varied and appropriate, solidity of structure, and even, considering the limited resources available, some attempt at orchestral colour.

Apart from a few songs, which have woven themselves inextricably into our national heritage of music, Purcell is probably better known to the present generation by his instrumental music than by anything that he wrote. On the whole this is well, since it is here that we find Purcell, if not at his greatest, nevertheless more uniform, more sustained, and perhaps more corresponding to the general ideal of what a great composer should be. The form of his instrumental music is restricted, but within its narrow limits he attained a singularly

even level of excellence. If we do not here find the tremendous grandeur or the poignant passion of certain inspired moments of "Dido and Æneas" and "Dioclesian," we get a far more intimate view of Purcell's own self, of the exquisite charm of his personality, and of the lovely serenity of character which endeared him to his contemporaries. Purcell's string sonatas are admittedly founded on Italian models, but they have a personal touch which is essentially English. Here almost more than in anything he wrote we can realise how far Purcell was in front of his age. At times he rises to the majestic breadth of Handel, and in his harpsichord pieces—notably the famous Toccata—he often suggests the concentrated emotion of Bach. In his instrumental works Purcell is often slight, but rarely trivial; often playful, but never commonplace. To those who look upon music as the supremest means of personal expression given by God to man, rather than as a pleasing concatenation of sounds agreeably adapted for passing an idle half-hour, Purcell's music is indescribably interesting, since in him we find the germs of all that composers since his day have developed in such amazing fashion. He never, of course, was a writer of programme music in the modern sense of the word, but that he used music as a means of expressing his own joys and sorrows, his own hopes and fears, it is impossible for anyone who listens with a sympathetic ear to deny. Herein lies the secret of Purcell's charm, of that fascination which, in spite of countless

weaknesses, insufficiencies and failings, his music still continues to exercise. Judged from a certain standpoint he was a failure, indeed the most tragic part of his story is that when he died there was no one to continue his work. Had he lived longer, and had he succeeded in founding a school to carry on the traditions that he had inaugurated with such splendid success, the whole history of English music might have been altered. As it was he left no successor, and when Handel appeared in England fifteen years after Purcell's death he took undisputed possession of the field and turned the course of music in England into an entirely different channel. From the historical point of view Purcell's achievement remains a monument of sterile endeavour, yet his career is one to which Englishmen can still point with legitimate pride, and his personality still shines across the ages to all who have ears to hear and souls to love.

BACH

CHAPTER V

BACH AND HANDEL

THE careers of Handel and Bach, so nearly co-terminous as they were, tempt to comparison; but the temptation as a rule is resisted by biographers. I do not know why this is so, for the men and their music gain in interest by juxtaposition. It is curious to find that two men, born as it appears in strikingly similar surroundings, should differ so completely in every way. Both sprang from the Protestant middle class of northern Germany. But their prenatal experiences, if I may borrow an idea and a phrase of Samuel Butler's, had been as diverse as those of their lives were to be. Bach sprang from a long line of musicians, some of them distinguished as composers, others as performers. He was cradled in an atmosphere of music, and began to study the art almost as soon as he could speak. Handel, on the other hand, belonged to a family singularly lacking in musical taste. His father appears positively to have disliked the sound of a musical instrument. Handel felt within himself an irresistible impulse towards a musical career, but every step towards it had to be stubbornly contested. That he did get his way in the end was due even more to his own pluck and deter-

mination than to the happy accident which directed the attention of a great personage to the genius of the youthful musician. We know so little of the influence of heredity that it is perhaps hardly worth while to discuss the question whether the music of Handel and Bach is the natural outcome of what I have already called their prenatal experiences. Generally speaking it would be expected that the offspring of a race of musicians would write music that should have a special appeal to musicians, while a genius of spontaneous growth would touch the general heart of mankind more directly. It is perhaps so in the case of Handel and Bach to a certain extent. Handel's extraordinary flow of melody has unquestionably endeared him to many who are incapable of appreciating the sublime flights of his imagination, while Bach's tendency towards intricacy of musical structure naturally appeals more to cultivated musicians than to the man in the street. But the test of a popularity of some two hundred years' standing is wholly elusive. The popularity of Handel and Bach in this country —so far as they can be said to be popular—rests almost entirely upon "The Messiah" and the two settings of the Passion Music, in which the music has won its way to esteem largely by reason of its association with a subject of enduring interest to a nation of professed Christians.

It is more to the point to observe the natural tendency of each composer towards an individual method of expression—a tendency which it is not

unsafe to attribute to hereditary or the lack of hereditary instinct. Handel was gifted with extraordinary facility of musical utterance. His habit of noting the time occupied in composing the greater part of his works gives us a record of rapid composition, which is unparalleled in the history of music. We may suppose, indeed, that although "The Messiah," to take but one instance, was written in twenty-three days, a great deal of the music existed in the composer's brain before he took pen in hand; yet his works followed so closely one upon another that it is impossible that even the periods of gestation can have been other than short. This extraordinary facility entailed the faults of its qualities. Handel's tendency—insignificant indeed if judged in the light of his vast output and of its generally exalted character, but still recognisable—was towards a commonplace method of expression. Writing as he did *currente calamo*, he had not always time to weigh the worth of his ideas. He was content to repeat certain conventional formulas, certain well-worn cadences, and if a second-rate idea occurred to him he did not always wait for a first-rate one. Bach, on the other hand, though the enormous quantity of work which he left precludes the belief that he was a slow worker, appears not to have enjoyed Handel's charmed ease of inspiration. His tendency is towards a crabbed method of utterance, so pronounced at times as to be almost inarticulate.

The natural tendency of each composer was

encouraged by his environment. Bach lived all his life in small German towns remote for the most part from the main currents of musical thought. We know that he studied with avidity all the music that came within his reach, but his opportunities in this respect were limited. He met no composers whose abilities were at all commensurate with his own; he heard no music that he did not know to be infinitely inferior to what he wrote himself. He was beset by the narrow prejudices of provincial life; he was hampered by an almost total lack of proper appreciation; his means were limited; his family was a perennial source of anxiety and discomfort. As he grew older his thoughts centred more and more closely in himself. In a word he wrote for himself alone.

Handel, on the contrary, from his earliest days lived in the full tide of the world. He was an assiduous traveller; he heard the music of all countries; he rubbed shoulders with the most famous of contemporary composers. He wrote with feverish rapidity, his finger upon the pulse of the people. He knew the life of courts and theatres; he had a practical acquaintance with every available means of performance. His works were produced almost before the ink they were written with was dry, and he was able to judge the effect of every resource as soon as he tried it.

The lives of the two men could hardly have been more diametrically opposed, and their surroundings re-acted inevitably upon their music. It is vain to

speculate how a changed environment might have affected either. Bach might have learned to enlarge the borders of his sympathies in London, Handel to have been a severer critic of himself in Leipzig. Knowledge of the world might have rubbed off the angles of Bach's style, and the meditative serenity of a provincial town might have given a graver tinge to Handel's radiant self-sufficiency; but the differences between the two men were of a kind that no surroundings could materially modify. We know very little of their personalities from contemporary records, but they have pictured themselves for us in their works more truthfully and more fully than any biographers could do. Their attitudes towards life were radically different. Bach's range of thought was narrow, but by its very restriction it gained in intensity and concentration. I am not now referring to his choice of subject, which was unavoidably guided by circumstances, but to his manner of considering that subject. Bach's mind was typical of his time and place. He had imbibed to the full the Lutheran view of the relations between God and man. The thing seen to him had no glory, save as it shadowed the truths of his creed. A primrose by a river's brim he valued not as a thing of beauty, but as a symbol of his Creator's beneficence. This view of things permeates his music. He was more a moralist than an artist. His music was not to him an end in itself, so much as an engine for the saving of men's souls. He sings his Maker's

praise, not for the joy of singing, but as an act of thankfulness due from man to God. He tells the story of the Passion not as the most tragic and moving episode in the world's history, but as the means of grace to lost sinners.

The moral view of life colours Bach's music as it has coloured that of no other great composer, and it is the complete and entire sincerity of that view which gives to his music its piercing poignancy of appeal. The story of Haydn praying before beginning to compose may or may not be true of Haydn, but it would be much truer of Bach. Never did composer take himself and his mission in deeper earnest. The tenets of Christianity were hard facts to him, not subjects for elegant musical embroidery. Life was a bitter struggle against definite powers of evil, heaven a place of splendour to be attained only by ceaseless warfare. It is impossible not to feel that though as an artist Bach had a vivid feeling for sheer musical beauty, as a man he mistrusted it. Beauty for its own sake seemed to him an unworthy object for a Christian to pursue. Springing from this view of life, or at any rate closely allied to it, is the curiously vivid realism of Bach's music. Never has composer visualised his subject with such intensity as Bach. There are no half-lights, no subtle effects of chiaroscuro in Bach; he saw his subject with extraordinary definiteness, and to say that he saw it in the case of a composer of his accomplishment, is to say that he gave it musical realisation. We talk

lightly of the incomplete means of expression at the command of old composers. Incomplete they would probably be in the hands of modern musicians, but they were amply sufficient for the men of their day. A man like Bach, gifted as he was with unequalled clearness of mental vision, coupled with complete command of his material, could often do more with a few strings and hautboys than our modern composers can accomplish with all the paraphernalia of a Wagnerian orchestra. There has probably never been a musician more adept than Bach at picturing a scene in music. It would be easy to quote a hundred instances of his masterly command of the picturesque, but a few will suffice.

Let us take the opening of the cantata "Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen," the words of which are read by the faithful as prophetic of the journey of the Magi to Bethlehem. With a touch Bach gives us the whole scene, the long procession passing over the desert, the solemn march of the caravan, the tinkling of the camels' bells. Or let us turn to the instrumental movement in another cantata, "Wachet auf," which describes the wise virgins going forth to meet the Bridegroom. See how the train of girls dances out into the night, swaying hither and thither to the sound of strange Eastern music, while their lamps twinkle in the darkness! How is it done—with a few violins and an organ? Ah, that is Bach's secret! This gift of Bach's, of extracting the utmost conceivable

amount of picturesque expression from the words he had to set, was one which sometimes led him perilously near the verge of disaster. He inherited from his German predecessors a taste for quaint musical devices, which he sometimes indulged unduly. Occasionally he condescended to something very like a musical pun, as in the song "Ach mit gedämpft und schwachen Stimme," where the fact that the word "Dämpfer" happens to be the German for a mute led him to adorn the song with an obbligato for muted violin, or in the "Crucifixus" of the B Minor Mass, where he pictures Christ hanging on the Cross by a series of suspensions! There is a suggestion of provinciality in this, which a wider knowledge of the world would probably have corrected. But defects such as these, if defects they can be called, are almost inevitable in the case of a man with Bach's special qualities.

If Bach, like Dante, shrank from no touch however grotesque that he thought would heighten the impressiveness of his picture, he could also, like Dante, soar to regions of such imaginative splendour as few composers have ever attained. Curiously enough for a composer so essentially German in feeling and attitude, we find Bach at his greatest in music written to Latin words, such as the B Minor Mass and the Magnificat, where the associations of the text drew him for the moment from his favourite chorales towards a more Italian form of thought and expression. It is one of the most

signal proofs of Bach's musical genius that in setting the words of the Latin Mass he put off to a great extent the narrow Protestantism which colours so strongly his German sacred works. There is nothing in the Mass that could not have been written by a Catholic. There is hardly a trace in it of that love of dwelling on the physical aspect of things which is the prevailing note of Lutheranism, and of which such an extravagance as Luther's conception of the Lamb of God "in heisser Lieb' gebraten" or Cowper's

> "There is a fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Emmanuel's veins."

may be taken as typical examples.

A more striking proof of Bach's genius than this modification of his usual mental attitude could not be desired, but though the Mass unquestionably represents the climax of his achievement it cannot for this reason be taken as a typical work. It is rather in the Passion according to St Matthew that we find Bach's normal view of things represented in its fullest and most transcendent development. The Passion music as treated by Bach is a typically German art-form, but like most other musical developments it can be traced to an Italian source. The recitation of the history of the Passion by three priests, representing respectively the narrator, Christ, and the other personages of the sacred drama, was an ancient custom in the Roman Church. During the palmy days of the polyphonic period the

service was further developed by setting the cries of the crowd as short choral movements. The Lutheran Church borrowed the form of the service from Rome, and characteristically added to it reflective and explanatory passages designed to impress upon the congregation the spiritual meaning of the story, and hymns which gave the congregation an important share in the service. The result, however, admirable as a religious exercise, was artistically deplorable, the unity of the action being disturbed no less by the moralising solos introduced at every turn than by the devotional hymns of the congregation. Nothing of course was further from the views of the Lutheran Church than an artistic presentment of the story of Christ's passion. Its aim was solely to bring home to the faithful the physical facts of the Crucifixion, and to use them as a text upon which to offer a series of improving reflections. Bach's habit of mind was peculiarly in sympathy with this view, and in his settings of the Passion, of which two out of five survive (for it is not easy to accept the feebly sentimental Luke Passion as his) we find his genius displayed with consummate dignity and splendour. Of these two works, the verdict of the ages has chosen the Matthew Passion as incomparably the greater, great as the John Passion unquestionably is. A comparison of the two works is deeply interesting, and has a special value to the student of Bach's character. No one who has studied that character will be surprised to find Bach in keener sympathy with St

Matthew's version of the Passion story than with that of St John. This is not the place to discuss questions of Gospel authenticity, nor to attempt an adjustment of the divergences between the two narratives; it will be enough to point out that while St John is concerned principally with the person of Christ, the grandeur and beauty of which casts everything else into the shade, St Matthew delights in vivid and picturesque details, which are not recorded by the Evangelist who was an eye-witness of the scene he describes. To a man of Bach's markedly realistic tendencies the dramatic value of St Matthew's version made a special appeal. The agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the sleep of the disciples, the servant's recognition of Peter by his Galilean accent, the death of Judas, the dream of Pilate's wife, the bearing of the Cross by Simon of Cyrene, the mocking of Christ on the Cross by the scribes and people, the darkness, the rending of the veil of the Temple, the earthquake, and the apparition of the dead, all these incidents appear only in St Matthew's version; and it is these, illustrated as they are by the poignant realism of Bach's music, that give to his Matthew Passion its amazing vitality of expression. It is worth noting that the rending of the veil of the temple appeared to Bach so important a feature in the history of the Crucifixion that he actually incorporated it into his setting of St John's version, though it does not, of course, appear in St John's gospel. The John Passion is earlier than

the Matthew, and apart from its widely different treatment of the sacred story, the highly coloured narration of St Matthew being replaced by a far profounder conception of the character of Christ, which obviously appealed less potently to Bach's precise and realistic genius, its treatment is in many ways more experimental and less successful than that of the later work. The vocal writing of many of the solos is crabbed and harsh to a degree rarely surpassed in the history of music, and the utterances of the crowd are treated more in the manner of oratorio, that is to say they are epic rather than dramatic in style, and lack the vivid force of the Matthew choruses. It is therefore in the Matthew Passion that we find the completest and most typical expression of Bach's genius. It is necessary in considering the work to remember that it is essentially a religious service. As a narrative it would be improved by the excision of all but the words of the gospel; the different points of view introduced by the chorales and the reflective solos are fatal to its unity as a work of art, but regarded as a service they take the place of the sermon and the hymns in the modern office. The work is a complete exposition of the Lutheran view of the Passion, and however little that view may be in consonance with modern thought it must be confessed that Bach has expressed it with a completeness and a fervour of conviction that make his work one of the most overwhelming masterpieces in all the history of music.

The qualities displayed in the Matthew Passion music are found in a greater or less degree throughout the long series of cantatas which Bach wrote for performance in church during his sojourn as organist in Leipzig and other towns. Reference has already been made to the eagerness and certainty with which Bach fastened upon any opportunity for picturesque or vivid detail, and instances of this might be multiplied indefinitely. Another striking feature of the cantatas, and one which is also found in Bach's organ music, is the splendid use made of the chorales or hymn tunes which played so important a part in Lutheran worship. Englishmen can form but a faint idea of the effect upon a devout congregation which Bach's magical treatment of the well known melodies must have exercised. To hear a tune familiar from childhood enriched and varied by new and wondrous harmonies according to the sentiment of the words, as is done repeatedly in the two settings of the Passion Music and in the cantatas, must have brought home to those who heard it the meaning of what they were singing in a novel and irresistible fashion. Sometimes a whole cantata, such as "Christ lag in Todesbanden," is in effect a series of variations upon one well known tune, each variation corresponding in its treatment to the special sentiment of each verse. A cantata such as this resolved itself into a series of devout meditations upon a familiar theme. The beauty and ingenuity of the thing delights us still,

though the musical sermon which Bach doubtless intended it to be may possibly miss some of its effect. Bach's nature inclined to seriousness if not to gloom, and this particular cantata is a strangely sombre one for Easter. In another cantata the famous tune "Ein' feste Burg" is treated with amazing wealth of resource and imagination. One of the verses beginning, "If all the earth with fiends were filled," is an astonishingly vivid piece of realism, the orchestra giving a highly-coloured picture of an orgy of demons, while the splendid old tune is thundered out by trumpets through all the tempestuous confusion—a curious anticipation, by the way, of the general scheme of the "Tannhäuser" overture.

One of the surest tests of a man's mental fibre is his attitude towards death, and here the nobility of Bach's nature is manifested in the most incontrovertible manner. He lived in a sturdy age. The Lutherans of his time had none of that pusillanimous horror of death which is characteristic of a later epoch. Many of their hymns, a legacy no doubt from times of persecution, speak of death as a friend. "Komm, du süsse Todesstunde," says one; "Schlage doch, gewünschte Stunde," cries another. In all of them there breathes an air of pious resignation and sometimes of that curious rapture, a belated echo of which occurs in Walt Whitman's wonderful lament for President Lincoln. Bach's treatment of the subject is always dignified and exalted, one of his earliest cantatas "Gottes

Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit" being conspicuous in this respect. At times his imagination carries him towards a more definitely picturesque handling, as in the cantata "Liebster Gott, wann werd' ich sterben," the opening chorus of which has been likened to a peaceful country churchyard, blossoming in the spring, through which a funeral procession winds to the accompaniment of the little bell ringing throughout the movement in the upper register of the flutes. More imposing and no less truthfully realised is the ceremonial splendour of death, as pictured in the "Trauer Ode," a work written for the funeral of a patroness.

Bach's imagination was often exercised by visions of the Judgment Day, a subject specially dear to the Lutheran mind. In his two cantatas on the tune, "O Ewigkeit du Donnerwort," he uses the contrast between the terror of sinners and the faith of the righteous with tremendous musical effect; and in the shorter setting, which is a curious dialogue between Fear and Hope, the mysterious voice of the Holy Spirit uttering from Heaven the words, "Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord," is employed with a sudden beauty that has hardly a parallel in music. But for concentrated imagination and sheer power of expression nothing in Bach's works surpasses the passage in the B Minor Mass, which describes the sleep of the dead and their awaking at the sound of the trumpet. Many critics have said that Bach is greatest in his organ music, and there, it is true, we find him

more of an artist and less of a preacher than in any of his choral works. Freed from the trammels of a set subject, his genius here soars aloft with incomparable majesty and splendour. No one has ever understood the organ as Bach did. It is in a sense the foundation of all his music, and in his hands it speaks with the tongues of angels. Abstract music has nothing grander and more dignified to show than some of his "mountainous fugues," as Browning calls them, and the soul of man has never been poured forth in tones of purer or more exalted rapture than in such a work, to quote but one of many, as the great Fantasia in G.

Bach, to sum up, spoke through music as few have spoken. It is a commonplace to say that every man lives in his work, but Bach lives in his as hardly another musician has done. His personality was tremendously powerful, and we feel it in every bar that he wrote. His range of vision was not wide, but what he saw he saw steadily and saw it whole. The very narrowness of his life concentrated his ability. His subject may be this or that, but it is always Bach that speaks through it.

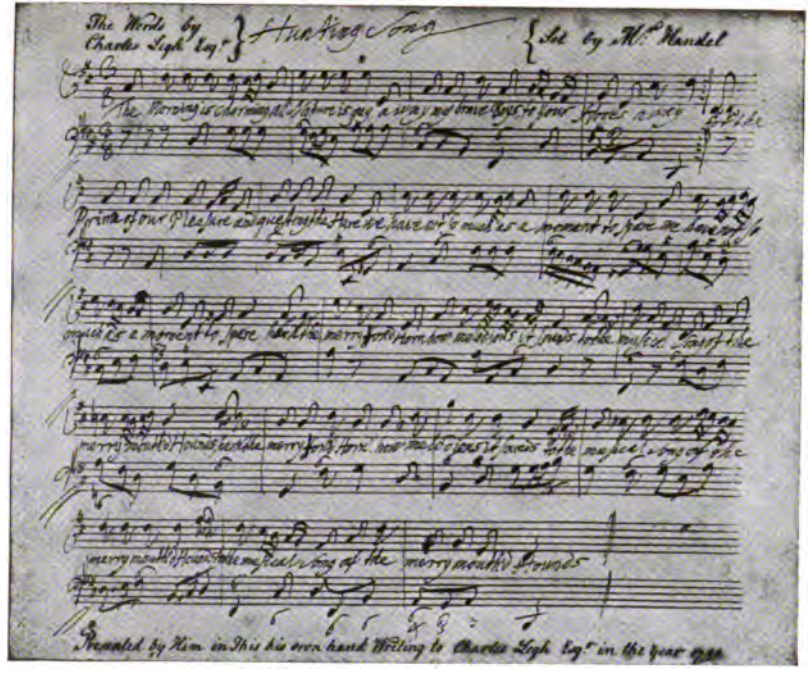
To pass from Bach to Handel is like passing from a cathedral into the open air. The natures of the men, as I have said, were radically different, and the circumstances of their lives accentuated those differences. Bach, cooped in one organ-loft after another, turned the fiery intensity of his genius more and more fiercely upon himself; Handel, with the world for his stage and humanity for his theme,

gained in breadth of view and knowledge of his fellow-men as years went on. Comparisons between one art and another are generally elusive, but the similarity between the greatest of German musicians and the greatest of English poets is worth noting. Bach, in his choice of subject and in the profoundly personal note of his work no less than in the burning intensity of his vision, has much in common with Milton. Handel has Shakespeare's range of thought, Shakespeare's all-embracing sympathy with every phase of life, and Shakespeare's matchless serenity of temperament. We admire Bach and Milton; Shakespeare and Handel we love.

The sun of success rose early upon Handel. When once parental objections had been overcome, and he was fairly started in his career as a composer, he soon achieved fame. His early Hamburg operas, written while he was still in his teens, made his name more widely known than Bach's probably was at any time in his life; his visit to Italy set the seal upon his success, and he came to England at the age of twenty-five the most famous composer in Europe.

For the next thirty years of his life he was principally engaged in writing for the stage. His theatrical career was chequered. His operas pleased *connoisseurs*, but he had to contend with powerful enemies. In the end he was crippled by bankruptcy and paralysis, and in 1741 he renounced the stage and devoted himself to writing the

oratorios with which his fame is now principally associated. His life-work therefore falls naturally into two divisions. In each of these he was during his life-time admittedly pre-eminent, but it happens that while opera since his day has developed with extraordinary rapidity, oratorio has tended to advance but little upon specially characteristic lines; therefore even to the casual hearer of to-day Handel's oratorios still represent the highest human achievement in this particular department of music, while his operas are as a rule summarily dismissed as being too old-fashioned in structure to merit more than a passing word. A modern opera moves in so entirely different a world from that which Handel knew, that it is difficult to believe they have anything in common. A modern oratorio, on the contrary, in so far as it is not merely an opera denuded of stage accessories, carries unmistakable traces of the influence of Handel, and can be discussed, so to speak, in terms of Handel. It therefore happens that the general view of Handel is now concentrated almost entirely upon his oratorios, while his operas, even by musical historians, are treated as a negligible quantity. It is true that even the most revolutionary change in musical fashion could never restore Handel's operas to the stage. The disappearance of that repulsive anomaly, the male soprano, has made it impossible for us to reconstruct the conditions of eighteenth century opera. Yet unless a work written for the stage has been


The Words by
Charles Egh Esq.r
Hunting Song
Set by Mr. Handel
Presented by Him in His own hand Writing to Charles Egh Esq.r in the year

FACSIMILE OF HANDEL'S HUNTING SONG

Mail

heard upon the stage it cannot be judged satisfactorily, and it is too much for a musical historian to ask reasonable beings to believe that in considering the genius of Handel his operas are to be ignored *en masse* because the change of musical taste has banished them to the shelves of a library.

Handel was admittedly a man of exceptional ability, a practical musician who heard his works performed as soon as he wrote them, and a theatrical manager of wide experience. Can we believe that for forty years of his life he wrote and produced works which have no value save as containing a few songs that are still potent to charm the popular ear? The thing is inherently incredible. Handel's operas are cast in a form that no longer appeals to the public, it is true; but the form satisfied Handel and the other composers of his day, and it satisfied the audiences who applauded them. Unless therefore we dismiss the composers and audiences of the eighteenth century as a parcel of dolts, it will be well to examine the works which our historians condemn so lightly, and to see if we cannot find in them some explanation of the success which they undoubtedly won. It is generally said that Handel's operas are merely a string of solos and duets with a chorus to bring down the curtain. A cursory examination of the works in question reveals that this is not the case. Handel used the chorus in his operas more freely than is usually stated, and when occasion demanded he wrote con-

force with which he gave realisation to any spark of human interest which the situation contained. I have already referred to "Alcina," which is founded on an incident in Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso," and is almost identical in subject with one of Gluck's most famous works. The plot is excellent, and the opera contains many scenes which give full scope to Handel's genius. Alcina is a pagan sorceress, who, like Armida, has beguiled a Christian knight, in this case named Ruggiero, to her enchanted gardens, and holds him there imprisoned in her voluptuous embraces. He is finally released by his bride Bradamante, who comes in disguise to seek him, and persuades him to destroy Alcina's palace by breaking the magic urn, which is the symbol of her power. The opening scene in the enchantress's palace is one of captivating loveliness. There are choruses and dances of magical beauty, and Alcina sings her passion in strains of the most voluptuous tenderness. Alcina, in fact, is one of Handel's most carefully studied characters. When she discovers Ruggiero's faithlessness there is a wonderful scene in which she pours forth her soul in tempest, calling on her minion spirits to assist her. Later her mood changes, and a lovely air "Mi restano le lagrime" paints the anguish of her wounded heart in the most moving colours. Ruggiero is finely drawn also. His air "Verdi prati" is well known in concert rooms, but apart from its context it loses all its psychological force. It is the knight's farewell

to the enchanted splendour of Alcina's garden, and Handel with his unrivalled knowledge of human nature has contrived to suggest in the music a touch of that regret, which, so long as men are what they are, can hardly fail to make itself felt at such a time. Those who measure the works of earlier days by the suggestion of modernity which they exhibit, should compare Handel's treatment of this scene with Goethe's poem "Rinaldo," in which the same idea is elaborated with truly Goethesque subtlety. "Alcina" does not by any means stand alone among Handel's operas; in fact it is hardly possible to open one of them without finding proof of the remarkable manner in which Handel turned every opportunity of character-drawing to account. "Rinaldo" and "Amadigi" resemble "Alcina" in plot, both dealing with the attempts of a heathen sorceress to win a Christian knight from allegiance to his faith and his love, though the action is set in different surroundings. "Rinaldo" is one of the most picturesque of Handel's operas. It rings with the clash of arms and the tumult of battle, and every opportunity of vivid painting is eagerly seized. The march of the Crusaders, the entry of Armida in her dragon chariot, the array of Argante and his Paynim knights, the conflict of the Christian warriors with the monsters who protect Armida—all these are drawn in the most brilliant colours, and as a contrast we have scenes of exquisite charm such as that of Almirena's garden, lulled by the song of

birds and the murmur of brooks, or that in which the Sirens endeavour to beguile the Crusaders in a song of magical loveliness. "Amadigi" is conceived in a quieter vein, the enchantress Melissa being of tenderer fibre than either Alcina or Armida, though she too can rise to strange heights of passion upon occasion. This opera is singularly rich in beautiful and expressive songs, and it would be legitimate to maintain that Amadigi's lovely air "Susurrate, onde vezzose" is unsurpassed for sheer musical beauty in the whole range of Handel's works. The close of "Amadigi" is astonishingly fine, the scene in which the ghost of Dardanus rises from the dead and warns Melissa to desist from persecuting the lovers having a touch of grim horror that recalls the wonderful scene in the cavern of the witch of Endor in "Saul."

But it would be a long business to go through all Handel's operas, pointing out their beauties in detail. I should like to correct once for all the impression so carefully disseminated by historians that his operas are all alike. How different for instance are "Serse," a bustling comedy of intrigue, probably founded upon a Spanish model, and "Atalanta," a delicious tale of the woods, with its choruses of nymphs and hunters, and its indescribable air of light-hearted gaiety and out-of-door freshness. "Admeto," which is founded upon the world-renowned legend of Alcestis, is one of Handel's finest operas. It is disfigured by the usual silly underplot, but many of the scenes are

fully worthy of the noble story. Alcestis is one of Handel's finest creations, and the selfish amorist Admetus is very happily drawn. The supernatural part is exceedingly impressive; the overture to the second act, in which the horrors of the infernal regions are described, is a wonderful piece of tone-painting; and the opening scene, in which the dying Admetus is tormented by the Furies that gather round his couch, is no less striking than the corresponding scene in Gluck's "Iphigenia in Tauris." But I must pass over the rest of the operas, with only a reference to "Riccardo," with its wonderful scene of storm and shipwreck; to "Giustino," with its romantic apparition of Fortune and its charming sailors' chorus (possibly the model of Mozart's "Placido è il mar" in "Idomeneo"); and to "Giulio Cesare," with its vision of Parnassus, to name but a few of the picturesque details scattered through Handel's operas. The student may safely be left to note these and many other beauties at his leisure. I can assure him that he will find much to convince him that so far from merely stringing airs and duets together to suit the vitiated taste of a public that cared for nothing but vocal display, Handel brought to his task not merely a mature knowledge of stage effect, but an unfailing wealth of imagination, controlled, it is true, by an ever present sense of the essentially lyrical nature of opera, together with a grasp of character and a sympathy for human nature such as those who know

his operas only by a few detached songs can never realise.

When we leave Handel's operas for his oratorios we come to more familiar ground. The operas are practically unknown to modern musicians, but though the popularity of "The Messiah" has tended to cast the other oratorios into the shade, the latter with few exceptions are still occasionally performed, and they are published in a cheap and handy form, so that those who care to study them can do so more easily and more successfully than is possible in the case of the operas.

In the oratorios, therefore, we seem to come closer to Handel than in any of his other works. In no case is it possible to judge finally of a man's music unless we hear it performed, but in this respect some composers suffer less than others. Bach, for instance, if he heard his works performed at all, which was often not the case, only heard such poor performances that he cannot have well judged what their effect would have been in happier circumstances. This reacted on his style. We may take it for granted that if he had had competent vocalists at his command he would have written music that they could sing, instead of purely instrumental solos in which the special claims and qualities of the human voice are often consistently ignored. Handel, on the contrary, was a practical musician in every way, and it is not until we hear his works performed that we can appreciate them at their true value. We can see the beauty of his

operas as it were in a glass darkly, but at a performance of one of his oratorios we have him face to face.

What must strike every student of Handel's works forcibly is his appreciation of the value of form. In our own day the various forms in which music is cast have tended to encroach upon each other's peculiar provinces. Opera, as I have already said, has approached the confines of drama; oratorio has borrowed much of the structure and even the terminology of opera. In recent times a musical form called the dramatic cantata has sprung into being, which is often merely an opera designed for concert performance. Cantatas such as Berlioz's "Faust" and Sullivan's "Martyr of Antioch" have actually been performed on the stage with comparatively little loss of effect. Handel's mastery and knowledge of form prevented him from falling into such an error as this implies. He knew how important to a work of art is a definite atmosphere, and his oratorios move in a world fundamentally different from that of the stage. As an opera corresponds to a drama, so should an oratorio correspond to an epic. "The Messiah," which is throughout entirely impersonal in structure, is perhaps the most perfect example of an oratorio, but it is not necessary that an oratorio should be impersonal. The form of oratorio is retained in works such as "Solomon" and "Samson," although there are definite characters in each. There are speeches in "Paradise Lost," but they do not

prevent it from being an epic. The relation of an oratorio to life is on a different plane from that of opera, and it is here that Handel's mastery of form is proved. He never swerves from his conception of oratorio, even in situations which would naturally lend themselves to dramatic treatment. Thus his oratorios have a unity such as no other works of their class possess. It is only necessary to compare "Samson" with "Elijah" to feel this. In "Elijah" there are many scenes which would certainly not lose, perhaps would gain, by being performed upon the stage. They are often brilliantly and successfully treated in themselves, but they are at variance with the general scheme of the work. They are purple patches which stand out in glaring contrast with the main fabric of the oratorio. It is not too much to say that in Handel's oratorios this inequality of style is never felt. Handel has that grasp of form which is characteristic of the greatest masters in every branch of art. The imaginative faculty, which he also possessed in a supreme degree, is distributed more unequally, but this unerring sense of form is rarely found save with the noblest creative genius.

Apart from the majestic and impeccable form of Handel's oratorios, the point in them that must infallibly strike the most casual observer is their immense range of thought. Handel's imagination was irrepressible, his sympathy was boundless; in this case the two things come to much the same thing, for without imagination a wide range of

sympathy is impossible. Nothing was strange to him; he could take every point of view. He who, in his own words, when writing the Hallelujah Chorus, "did see Heaven opened and the great God Himself," was equally at home in the high places of heathendom. Whatever his own religious views may have been—and his contemporaries believed him to be a sincere Christian—he had a most subtle appreciation for the nuances of pagan rites. His heathens never repeat themselves. Compare, for instance, the brilliant festivities of the Philistines in "Samson" with the "dismal dance around the furnace blue" in "Jephthah"; the frozen elegance of Roman ritual in "Theodora" with the barbaric raptures of the worshippers of Mithra in "Alexander Balus." But religion is but a fraction of the field he covered. He is equally at home in the far-away patriarchal life of the Old Testament as pictured in Caleb's song, "Shall I in Mamre's fertile plain," in "Joshua," in the pomp and glitter of Solomon's court, in the insolent splendour of Belshazzar's feast, in the clash and din of battle in "Deborah," in the cold raptures of martyrdom in "Theodora," in the sunny sparkling life of old Greece in "Semele," in the innocent revels of nymph and shepherd in "Acis." But it would be easy to fill pages in enumerating his triumphs. Nothing came amiss to him; the passions and aspirations of the human race are written in his oratorios for all to read. There is hardly a thought that man has conceived to which he has not given undying

expression. Love, its rapture or despair, is it not written in "Now, Love, that everlasting boy," in "Semele," and in "Draw the tear from hopeless love" in "Solomon"? Envy, calumny, jealousy, are they not immortally pictured in monumental choruses in "Saul," "Alexander Balus," and "Hercules"? But it is not only in his expression of the general passions common to humanity that he shines. He had a power of characterisation that in musical history has only been equalled by Mozart. He dealt often with unpromising subjects, but his imagination made definite realities out of the most shadowy figures, and when an opportunity was given him he could trace the development of character with the most exquisite subtlety. A remarkable instance is his treatment of the character of Jephthah's daughter, who is first presented as a charming type of light-hearted girlhood, but ennobled by suffering rises by gradual stages to sublime heights of self-sacrifice. Somewhat similar, yet most exquisitely differentiated, is Susanna, a tender loving wife exalted to the rank of heroine by trial. But in every work we find varying shades of character expressed with commanding truth. How different, for instance, is the stoical resignation, illumined by no gleam of faith in a hereafter, of the pagan Cleopatra in "Alexander Balus," from the rapture of exaltation with which the Christian Theodora meets her doom. Not only in his protagonists is Handel's marvellous knowledge of human nature and his supreme mastery of expres-

sion manifested. Many of the minor characters in his oratorios spring into definite life as it were with a few strokes of the brush. Can there be a completer presentment of braggart cowardice than the music of Harapha in "Samson," or of the smooth duplicity of an Oriental statesman than Ptolemy's first song in "Alexander Balus," though the man shows himself in his true colours later in the work? How subtly does Handel distinguish between the two mothers whose contention for the child of one of them forms a famous episode in "Solomon." How admirably, again, are the two Roman soldiers in "Theodora" contrasted, Valens, the black-hearted tyrant who delights in inflicting suffering for its own sake, and Septimius, a type of easy-going humanity with no pronounced convictions on any subject, but an ample supply of sympathy for the troubles of his friends. But here again I must needs cut short what might be a long catalogue.

It is commonly said of Handel by those whose knowledge of his works is bounded on the one hand by "The Messiah" and on the other by the "Celebrated Largo," that he had but one style for every subject. It is true that his style is strongly marked and individual, and it may well be that a man—even a musician—whose experience has been confined entirely to modern music, would derive an impression of monotony from Handel's works, largely because the methods of expression common to all eighteenth-century composers differ so widely from those now in common use as to

constitute almost a different musical language. I have known a child after hearing two Frenchmen converse ask its mother why they kept on saying the same thing, but a criticism of this kind would not carry weight in philological circles. Similarly Handel's music, and in fact all the music of the eighteenth century, demands a certain amount of study, before its subtler beauties can be detected. I have perhaps already said enough to convince my readers of the range of Handel's talent, but I cannot omit a striking proof of it in the remarkable manner in which he contrived to clothe each of his great choral works in an atmosphere peculiar to itself. Even the most superficial observer can hardly fail to notice the difference in general tone, let us say, between "Solomon" and "Susanna." "Solomon" is a work of pomp and circumstance. There is comparatively little in the plot that calls for emotional power, or for minute character-drawing. It is a glittering picture of the gorgeous court of the Jewish monarch. The music breathes of splendour and magnificence. There are many touches, of course, in the oratorio to relieve what might otherwise become the oppressive gorgeousness of the general texture of the work. There is the deliciously tender love-music, the incident of the judgment of Solomon, and other minor details, but the final impression of the work is one of rich, even barbaric, splendour. It is like a series of highly coloured frescoes in some wondrous palace

of the East. "Susanna," on the other hand, is a picture of village life. It is painted in a scheme of quietly modulated colours. Many of the songs, like the lovely "Ask if yon damask rose be sweet," have almost a feeling of folk-music. The action of the story takes place during the captivity of the Jews in Babylonia, but only the opening chorus suggests anything like regret of a lost fatherland. The music for the most part is designedly simple in structure. Much of it is light, and at times almost humorous, as in the charming little chorus in which the village gossips discuss Susanna's trial among themselves in whispered chatter. The last chorus again, in which the moral of the story is set forth in strains of adorable simplicity, might well have served Mozart for a model when he wrote the "Vaudeville" at the end of his "Entführung aus dem Serail." Compare again a martial oratorio like "Judas Maccabæus" with "Alexander Balus," in which the oriental splendour of the background is so cleverly represented, often by curious experiments in orchestration, as in Cleopatra's song accompanied by flutes, harp and mandoline; or with "Theodora," with its suggestion of stately Roman ceremonial, or with "Semele" and "Hercules," in each of which the radiant splendour of Greece colours the whole atmosphere of the work; or with "Acis and Galatea," in which the vine-clad hills of Sicily and the blue Mediterranean beckon to us through every bar of the music.

It is, as a matter of fact, a grave injustice to Handel that fate has fixed on "The Messiah" as the one work by which he should be known to the general public of to-day; for "The Messiah," incomparable as it is, represents the many-sidedness of his genius singularly ill. Handel's unerring instinct bade him in "The Messiah" adopt a severer and a more reticent mode of expression than he employed in any of his other works. He felt that in treating a subject of this character the noblest of all instruments, the human voice, should be supreme, and he voluntarily denied himself the assistance of those orchestral devices which in his other oratorios he employed with such admirable effect. The orchestration of "The Messiah" is simpler and less ornate than in any of Handel's other oratorios, and over the whole work there breathes an air of gravity and solemn restraint, admirably in keeping with the tremendous subject, but by no means typical of the composer, whose feeling for picturesque detail, and whose knowledge of its application, was consummately acute. Yet as an expression of Handel's attitude to life in general and to Christianity in particular "The Messiah" is a document of extreme value. It is particularly interesting in this respect to compare it with Bach's Matthew Passion. The natural differences between the two composers are here summed up in the most convincing manner. Bach's work is a triumph of realism, Handel's of imagination. Bach emphasises the physical side of the

story of Christ's Passion, Handel the spiritual. Bach gives us the facts, Handel their meaning. Both works stand at the apex of human achievement. They are as different as the men who made them, and a knowledge of the one can only enhance our admiration for the other. Nevertheless it cannot be repeated too often that a knowledge of "The Messiah" is very far from connoting a knowledge of Handel. To enlarge upon but one point, a man who knows Handel only by "The Messiah" can have no conception of his passionate love for out-door nature and of his inimitable gift of recording her various phases in music. That he had this worship of nature no one who knows his works can deny. Let us take his "L'Allegro," which is a complete gallery of nature-pictures, from that wonderful piece of landscape-painting, "Mountains on whose barren breast," and the delicious little idyll, "Let me wander not unseen," to the marvellous moon-rise in the second part of "Sweet bird" (so rarely sung by the sopranos who revel in the opportunities for vocal display which that famous air affords), and the woodland magic of "Hide me from day's garish eye." But Handel's works are redolent of his love and comprehension of nature. Even "Solomon," which deals chiefly with the splendour of the court, has two perfect little vignettes of natural beauty, the lovely pastoral air "Beneath the vine and fig tree's shade," and "How green our fertile valleys look," through which the waters ripple and the breezes sing in

such adorable concert. I must pass with a word over "Saul," in which the love that passeth the love of woman is sung as it was never sung before or since; over "Samson," in which a hero's death is celebrated in strains of such incomparable majesty; over "Athaliah," in which the figure of the guilty queen is elaborated with Aeschylean majesty and horror; over "Israel in Egypt," in which the tale of a nation's redemption is told in language not less suggestive of inspiration than that of the Biblical historian himself. Handel has often been commiserated for the poor and unpoetical character of the librettos that he was called upon to set, and it is true that though the subjects of his oratorios are often magnificent, the diction of the poetasters who versified them was singularly pedestrian. Yet it is here that his genius is most triumphantly manifested. Even when the words that he was called upon to set were devoid of the smallest particle of poetical suggestion, his imagination would pierce to the idea underlying the miserable balderdash of the librettist and exalt it into glowing life and reality. At times he was fortunate enough to be called upon to set Milton and the Old Testament, and then his task was less exacting. Often a word or a phrase is enough to stimulate his activity to astonishing flights of imagination. In "Israel in Egypt" the words, "till thy people shall pass over, O Lord," inspired him with an amazing picture of the weary march of the Israelites over the desert — a picture

heightened by harmonies which even to our ears seem audacious in their rugged dissonance, and to an eighteenth-century audience must have sounded much as the harmonic experiments of a Richard Strauss sound to modern ears. This is immediately followed by another picture, suggested by the words, "Thou shalt bring them in," in which the serene loveliness of the land flowing with milk and honey is set forth with a tranquil charm that is rendered doubly captivating by the harsh discords of the preceding chorus. Before concluding I must refer very briefly to a subject over which much ink has already been spilt, the question of Handel's borrowings from other composers. That he did borrow is undeniable, and it is undeniable also that his own contemporaries, many of whom would not have neglected any possible opportunity of attacking him, saw no harm in his so doing. Some writers have wondered how it was that Buononcini's career was ruined by his having palmed off a madrigal of Lotti's upon the public as his own composition while Handel rifled other men's works undisturbed. The difference was this: Buononcini pretended that Lotti's madrigal was his own work, while Handel made no secret of his adaptations. The manuscripts of many works that he used are still extant in his own handwriting with the authors' names duly recorded upon them. It is evident, therefore, that no prejudice was attached in Handel's time to the practice that he followed. The extent and the

nature of his borrowings have been ridiculously exaggerated by writers who prefer to steal their facts from each other rather than to ascertain the actual state of the case for themselves. Often Handel took nothing but a melodic phrase which his instinct assured him would suit his purpose, and used it as the subject of an important chorus. When he did this he could no more be called a thief than could Brahms when he wrote a set of variations upon a theme borrowed from Handel. But any stick is good enough to beat a dog with, and a chorus in "Israel" founded upon a few notes taken from a cantata by Stradella has recently been referred to in a leading newspaper as "Stradella's fine chorus," while Handel has been summarily dismissed as a "grand old robber," because he took a phrase from a finicking little harpsichord piece by a man called Muffat, and on it founded the colossal chorus at the end of the "Ode for St Cecilia's Day," in which the terrors of the Judgment Day are depicted with an awful grandeur worthy of the brush of Michael Angelo. But occasionally Handel's borrowings were on a more extended scale. The chorus "Egypt was glad" in "Israel" is unquestionably an organ piece by an obscure German composer, transcribed almost note for note. Its place in the oratorio is between two of the most magnificently impressive choruses in the whole work, and I fear that it owes that proud position to a quality which its original composer probably did not suspect. Handel

wanted something colourless to enhance the effect of his two high lights; he could not on the spur of the moment write anything quite dull enough for his purpose, so he ventured to borrow from another composer a chorus which served his purpose admirably in every way.

But if Handel had borrowed or adapted or stolen far more than he did he would only have done what every great man has done to his heart's content. Chaucer translated freely from Jacobus de Voragine, Boccaccio, and many others. Shakespeare borrowed nearly all his plots and often versified Plutarch when it suited his purpose. Molière boasted that he took what he liked from whom he liked. The sources of "Paradise Lost" are notorious. Handel is in good company at any rate, and he can afford to smile at the pedantry of his detractors; but of course no one seriously pretends that the question of his debts to other men can affect our ultimate estimate of his genius.

It is far more difficult to read Handel's character in his works than Bach's. Handel is the Shakespeare of music; but he has left us no such record of himself as Shakespeare did in the sonnets, if, that is to say, Mr Sidney Lee's latest published opinion permits us to regard them as autobiographical. Bach, like Milton, is in every line that he wrote. The purpose that was rarely far from his mind shines through his music. Handel's personality, on the other hand, is elusive. He took delight in his work for its own sake. He

never preaches; he never moralises. Bach sometimes sinks the musician in the preacher; Handel is always an artist. Handel's extraordinary imaginative power made it easy for him to sympathise with every incarnation of human energy. Nothing was too remote for the wide circle of his sympathy. But this many-sidedness of his makes it difficult to read the man himself in his music. Nevertheless, to those who know his works intimately, the nature of Handel and his attitude to life are revealed in what he has written. Handel was an incurable optimist. He had that worship of beauty for its own sake that is inevitably allied to optimism. There are certain phases of modern thought which are not represented in his music, and it is partly from their absence that his appeal to the world of to-day is less potent than formerly. He loved life and drank deep of it; he looked upon death and was not afraid. There is nothing morbid in Handel. He was as blind to the beauty of decay as was the sculptor of the Elgin marbles. His view of life was simple, but it was magnificently sane. His music has a tonic force which it is not for our good that we neglect.

GLUCK

CHAPTER VI

GLUCK

GLUCK'S position in the history of music is somewhat anomalous. It is the general custom to speak of him as a reformer whose influence upon the development of opera was second to none in the whole history of music, but if his works are judged in connection with those of the men from whom he derived most, and of those who immediately followed him, he will be found to have deflected the stream of opera but little from its accustomed channel.

Gluck, in fact, has been set by recent musical historians upon a throne to which he is scarcely entitled. The reason is not difficult to find. Men writing on opera in the light of the revolution brought about by Wagner have glanced back over the records of the past in order to find a prototype for their hero. That prototype they have agreed to find in Gluck, who has consequently been depicted as a mighty reformer, hurling the effete traditions of eighteenth-century opera into space, and setting in their place the pure ideals of Peri and Monteverde. What he actually accomplished was very different.

The history of opera from the first has been the

tale of a struggle between two opposing forces, dramatic and lyrical expression. Peri, as we have seen, began on purely dramatic lines, thinking to resuscitate Greek tragedy. With Monteverde appeared the dawn of lyrical expression, and for the next century and a half the tendency of composers was always towards strengthening the lyrical side of opera and weakening the dramatic, until in the productions of Hasse, Porpora, and their contemporaries the dramatic had practically disappeared altogether. Then came the inevitable reaction, but this reaction was not in any sense of the word a revolution. There was no sudden upheaval, no violent disturbance of the old traditions. The spirit of reform was at work all over the musical world, but its presence made itself felt by gradual and often hardly perceptible changes. Gluck felt the hollowness and artificiality of the Italian opera of his early days, and moved constantly towards a truer and more forcible expression of human passion; but even if Gluck had never lived, the form cultivated by Hasse was doomed. Men like Traetta and Piccinni, working in Italy independently of Gluck and his theories, though they did not set forth their views in elaborate prefaces, were accomplishing a work scarcely less valuable in its results than that of their more famous contemporary; in fact, it is not too much to say that the invention of the concerted finale, which was entirely a product of the Neapolitan school, exercised a more important influence on the history of opera

than anything achieved by Gluck. Gluck's reforms affected French opera profoundly, but his influence here is to be traced rather in the life and passion which he infused into the stiff and frigid forms bequeathed by Rameau than in any revolt against the undue preponderance of lyrical expression, which had never been a fault of French opera. As regards Italy, Gluck's influence can hardly be traced at all in the developments of the later years of the eighteenth century. The influence of Gluck is occasionally to be found in the works of Mozart, particularly in "Idomeneo," but Mozart owed but little to him in comparison with his debts to the Italians, and so far as "Figaro" and "Don Giovanni" are concerned, Gluck might never have existed. It is absurd, therefore, to speak of a man as revolutionising the world of opera, when the greater and more important of its two hemispheres remained almost entirely unaffected by his influence. But if Gluck's achievements as a reformer have been over-estimated, his value as a composer can hardly be exaggerated. He is, as we have said, the principal spokesman of a period of reaction, and it is to his eternal credit that his profound realisation of the hollowness and artificiality of the older school of opera drove him into no excesses by way of counteracting the abuses which he strove to combat. His career is a picture, perhaps unequalled in the history of music, of a constant striving towards a pure ideal of art, a perfect blending of the lyrical and dramatic ele-

ments of opera, which he attained by a balanced power of intellect such as few musicians have possessed.

Gluck was born in 1714 in the Upper Palatinate. The days of his youth were passed in Bohemia, and in 1736 he entered the private band of Prince Melzi at Vienna, who subsequently took him to Milan, where his musical education, which had been begun at Prague, was completed under Sammartini. He was still in the Prince's service when his first opera "Artaserse" was produced. This won success, as did others written by Gluck at the same period, and when he visited England in 1745 he was already a composer of repute. But the chilly climate of England, as often before and since, proved fatal to the reputation won in facile Italy. Gluck's opera, "La Caduta dei Giganti," written to celebrate the Duke of Cumberland's victory over the Young Pretender, and produced in 1745, failed miserably, and the composer was reduced to seek the suffrages of the public by playing (to quote his advertisement) "a concerto on twenty-six drinking-glasses tuned with spring water, accompanied with the whole band, being an instrument of his own invention upon which he performs whatever may be done on a violin or harpsichord" —a strange resource for the future regenerator of opera!

Many years afterwards Gluck told Burney that it was his failure to hit the taste of the English public that convinced him of the inadequacy of the existing

form of opera, which till then he had accepted without question. It is not easy to view this statement as anything but a piece of ordinary politeness, since for many years after his visit to England Gluck continued to write in the accepted style of the day. It is more likely that a visit to Paris, which followed his unlucky expedition to London, opened his eyes to the possibility of reform in operatic treatment. In Paris he heard the music of Rameau, a composer whose influence in the formation of his later style was exceedingly important. French opera had never followed Italian taste in its worship of purely lyrical to the exclusion of dramatic expression, and Rameau continued the traditions of Lulli with infinitely greater musical ability and with a freshness of melodic inspiration that contrasts forcibly with Lulli's arid declamation. To note the influence of Rameau upon Gluck it is only necessary to compare the "Castor et Pollux" of the former, which was produced in 1737, with "Orfeo" (1761), the first work in which Gluck broke definitely with the Italian traditions which he had hitherto followed. It is the custom of musical historians to depict Gluck as brooding in solitary grandeur over the regeneration of opera, and evolving from his inner consciousness a conception of the union of drama and music of which "Orfeo" is the practical embodiment. The picture is highly effective, but it is not in accordance with fact. Gluck's ideas were generated very much like those of the rest of the world, by no spontaneous

germination, but by contact with the ideas of other people. It is possible, as he himself declared, that his failure in England may have suggested to him the opening up of new paths. But the direction these new paths were to take was unquestionably revealed to him by his introduction to Rameau's music. When he strove to exalt the dramatic side of opera at the expense of the lyrical, he was only doing what Rameau had already done. When he endeavoured, as he says in his preface to "Alceste," "to reduce music to its true function, which is to second poetry in expressing the emotions and situations of the play without interrupting the action nor chilling it with useless and superfluous ornaments," he was following faithfully in Rameau's footsteps. Gluck's genius was infinitely greater than Rameau's; where Rameau is cold and formal, Gluck vibrates with human passion, but in so far as regards the structure of his operas, especially in the prominence given to dance music and in the important share allotted to the chorus, he is as definitely a follower of Rameau as Rameau was a follower of Lulli.

It is perhaps worth while to examine in more precise detail the debt which "Orfeo" owes to "Castor et Pollux." The similarity in subject is conspicuous, the one dealing with a husband's rescue of a wife from the infernal regions, the other of a brother's rescue of a brother. Gluck wisely abjured the stupid allegorical prologue, a characteristic feature of French opera to which Rameau

blindly adhered, and his introductory symphony is purely Italian also. He had not when he wrote "Orfeo" learnt to make his prelude consonant with the spirit of the opera, but he never used the French form of overture—the slow movement followed by the fugato. The opening chorus of "Orfeo," however, is obviously modelled upon the funeral chorus with which the first act of "Castor et Pollux" begins, even the passages for three solo voices alternating with the chorus being imitated. Gluck shows at once how he has distanced his predecessor; the passionate cry of Orpheus gives a touch of pathos to the scene such as Rameau cannot command. In his alternation of recitative and cantabile in the following scene Gluck further betrays Rameau's influence, and here too the beauty of his melody is infinitely more striking than Rameau's stiff conventional phraseology. In the second act of "Orfeo" the resemblances to "Castor et Pollux" are still more striking. The scene at the mouth of hell, in which the Furies endeavour to bar the progress of Orpheus, is closely modelled upon that in which Pollux is opposed by a cohort of demons. Gluck's treatment of the situation is infinitely more moving than Rameau's, but the source of his inspiration is obvious. The opening notes of the scene, a descending passage for violins, seem to have been suggested by a similar phrase in the corresponding scene in "Castor and Pollux," and the general design of the act, with its choruses of demons ending with a dance, closely reproduces

Rameau's arrangement. In the following scene in the Elysian fields the points of resemblance between the two works are no less striking. Castor's lovely air, "Séjour de l'éternelle paix," in which the murmur of breezes and the rippling of brooks are so charmingly suggested, is plainly the source of Orpheus's famous "Che puro ciel," though here, as in all other respects, Gluck has left his model far behind in the beauty of his nature-painting. The song of the happy spirit as well as the graceful dance-movements also find their prototypes in Rameau's opera, while the closing scenes of the two works, with their chaconnes and conventional choruses of rejoicing, are practically identical in structure. In fact, throughout the work it is plain that Gluck had Rameau constantly in mind, his genius being exercised less in inventing a new form of opera than in infusing new life into one that he found ready to his hand. It is not my desire to belittle Gluck's genius by pointing out his debts to Rameau, but merely to show that his genius acted upon normal lines, and that his works owe their origin to the usual processes of assimilation and reproduction, not to the strange kind of partheno-genesis to which they are usually attributed.

The reception of "Orfeo" in Vienna, a city wholly given over to the idolatry of conventional Italianism so far as opera was concerned, was not encouraging, and for some years Gluck appears to have hesitated about advancing upon the path of progress that he had marked out for himself. The

works that he wrote during the period that immediately succeeded the production of "Orfeo," show no onward development, and in the story of his career they may be conveniently ignored. Gluck's position at the Imperial court compelled him to consult the taste of the day, and it is probable that such works as "Ezio," "Telemacco," and the little French comic operas in which stage-struck archduchesses loved to display their amateur prowess, were written very much against the grain. In "Alceste" (1767), however, we find the real Gluck again, much further advanced upon the path of progress than in "Orfeo." Gluck probably felt that in "Alceste" he was giving the Viennese a work more difficult of digestion than anything they were accustomed to, and to the published score of the opera he prefixed a preface, setting forth the theories on which he had worked, which is one of the most famous documents in the history of music. It is largely to this preface that the popular idea of Gluck is due, for in it Gluck takes to himself the entire credit of his emancipation from the fetters of Italian opera. It was natural and justifiable that he should do so, for in "Alceste" he had left Rameau so far behind that he might well look upon himself as the creator of a new form of opera. Nevertheless when he says: "I have wished neither to stop an actor when the dialogue is at its warmest, in order to let the orchestra play a tedious *ritornello*, nor to hold him back on a favourable vowel in the middle of

a word, that he may either show off the agility of his fine voice in a long roulade or wait for the orchestra to give him time to take breath for a cadenza," it is necessary to remember that he is addressing the Viennese public, which was trained on the depravities of Italian opera, and would find in "Alceste" an operatic system completely at variance to that which they knew and appreciated. Had he been writing for a French audience he would scarcely have claimed credit for merits which had been common to French composers since the days of Lulli. Yet the preface is exceedingly valuable from other points of view, and when Gluck tells us that he "believed music ought to be to poetry what vividness of colouring and well-managed contrasts of light and shade are to a correct and well-composed drawing, serving to animate the figures without marring the outline"; that "the overture ought to apprize the spectator of the action to be represented, and, so to speak, constitute itself the argument"; that "the co-operation of the instruments should be determined proportionately to the interest and passion of a scene," to quote only a few passages, we feel that we are in the presence of a man of intellect, who has viewed his art with a lofty seriousness, and is on a very different plane from the facile scribblers who compose merely to suit the taste of the hour, with no other ambition than to win fortune and popularity.

The history of opera, as has already been

observed, is a continual struggle between the two opposing forces of dramatic and lyrical expression, and Gluck's career is to a certain extent a miniature reproduction of the same struggle. We may look on it perhaps as a contest between instinct and theory. His instinct led him to lyrical expression, but his theories on opera compelled him to pay due respect to dramatic truth. The struggle is interesting to trace; first one force gains the upper hand, then the other. In "Orfeo," largely, no doubt, because of its subject, the lyrical element is all-important. "Alceste" is more dramatic in subject, and the result is that, as Gluck had not yet fully succeeded in getting his theory into working order, or rather did not handle it with the command that he subsequently gained, there is a good deal in it that is merely arid declamation with very little musical value at all. In "Paride ed Elena" the lyrical element is again supreme, but in "Iphigénie en Aulide" the dramatic once more asserts itself. "Armide" and "Iphigénie en Tauride" represent the culmination of Gluck's career, and in these two works we find what may justly be called a perfect balance between the two contending influences.

"Orfeo," "Alceste," and "Paride ed Elena," to say nothing of minor works written for court festivities, had given Gluck an assured position at Vienna. Burney, who visited him in 1769, found him established in a fine house, which was the centre of musical culture in Vienna. An in-

troduction to the composer was only to be obtained by the resources of diplomacy; it had to be won through the intervention of ambassadors and countesses. Gluck himself was "as formidable a character as Handel used to be, a very dragon of whom all are in fear." He ruled musical taste in Vienna with a rod of iron, and his favour was a passport to success. Nevertheless he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer, and he cast his glance upon Paris, where Marie Antoinette, an old pupil of his, ruled the court as Dauphiness. A certain amount of negotiation opened the doors of the Académie Royale de Musique to Gluck. The influence of Marie Antoinette was thrown into the scale, and Gluck was invited to come to Paris to conduct his "Iphigénie en Aulide." Of the incidents of Gluck's stay in Paris, of the warfare between the Gluckists and the Piccinnists, of the cabals and intrigues by which both parties prosecuted their purposes, I do not propose to weary the reader with a recital. These ancient quarrels have little interest for us now. Archæologists may delight to pry into the literature of the Gluck controversy, but ordinary readers are content to know that Gluck emerged from the struggle with all the honours. He appears to have been no less superior to his rival as a controversialist than as a musician, and in point of fact the skill with which Gluck employed all the arts of *réclame* is one of the least attractive sides of his character. A simpler, nobler attitude

in matters of this kind would have seemed more consonant with the true dignity of his nature.

In "Iphigénie en Aulide," the first opera that Gluck wrote for the French stage, the pendulum, which in "Paride ed Elena" had swung towards lyricism, swung back towards a more dramatic method of treatment. The subject of the work had a good deal to do with this. "Iphigénie en Aulide" differed widely in this respect from Gluck's previous works. The canvas is more crowded with figures, the emotions treated are more varied in their range. The work lacks the large simplicity of motive of "Orfeo" and "Alceste"; it is more minute in its psychological analysis, and subtler in its play of passion. In "Iphigénie en Aulide" Gluck has moments of supreme grandeur and beauty, such as the noble monologue of Agamemnon and the wonderful scene in which Clytemnestra pours forth her soul in tempest; but in much of it the treatment is too consciously dramatic rather than operatic. Gluck appears to be afraid of letting his music interfere with the development of the fable; he is content merely to underline the dialogue, and this gives to many scenes a disconcerting frigidity of style. Gluck said once to a friend that in writing his operas he tried to forget that he was a musician, meaning that he endeavoured to concentrate himself upon the dramatic elements of the subject he had in hand. He would have been surprised to hear that a later age judged him to have been most successful when he remembered that he was a musician,

and when he followed his instinct rather than his reason.

Gluck's theory as to the *raison d'être* of opera led him into strange passes, but his natural instinct was sound. He told his contemporaries that the musician's duty was to follow the words of the libretto, heightening their force by a discreet accompaniment; but his greatest triumphs were won when he forgot about the poor, cold words that he had to set, and went behind them to the feelings and emotions that underlay them. In "Iphigénie en Aulide" there are many scenes finely conceived and treated, but there are also many in which the music, itself arid and completely lacking in that lyrical feeling which is the only excuse for musical utterance, so far from heightening the emotion of the passage to which it is allied, is merely a drag upon such emotion as the bare words of the libretto express.

In "Armide," the second of his great works written for Paris, Gluck's instinct took its revenge upon his reason. He was always fond of talking about himself and his works, and *à propos* of "Armide" he told a friend that he had written it more in the spirit of a poet and a painter than of a musician. However that may be, it is of all his works the richest in musical beauty. It has a voluptuous charm such as no music of Gluck's had previously possessed, in fact such as was practically new to music altogether. The enchantments of Armida's magic garden are portrayed in scenes of the most languorous and bewitching loveliness,

and the character of Armida herself is a masterpiece of subtle psychology. The curious thing about "Armide" is that the libretto was one originally written by Quinault for Lulli some hundred years before Gluck took it in hand. Gluck, no doubt, was attracted by the romantic nature of the subject; but it is strange that he, who was so particular about his libretti, should have been content with so dreary and frigid a piece of work as this. However, his triumph was the greater, for he certainly owed nothing to the bald diction and conventional sentiments of his libretto. "Armide" stands alone among Gluck's works, a strangely romantic figure in its sternly classical surroundings. In "Armide" Gluck shook himself free for once of his theories about opera and art and expression, and wrote as his natural instinct prompted him. There is little dramatic interest in "Armide"; it is concerned almost entirely with emotion, which is as much as to say that it is an ideal subject for opera. Had the libretto been worthy of the subject, there is no saying what Gluck might not have made of it. As it is, he produced a work which curiously anticipates the romantic triumphs of a later day, and has a peculiar value of its own to the student of Gluck's musical character. "Iphigénie en Tauride" is usually spoken of as Gluck's masterpiece, and so in a sense it is, though the almost total absence of love-interest robs it of a natural source of enchantment. In form it certainly is more perfect than any other work of Gluck's, the balance between

lyrical and dramatic expression being preserved with singular justness. The characters are perhaps less interesting in themselves than those in "Iphigénie en Aulide," the grouping is simpler, and the play of feeling less vivid. But the handling of the theme is firmer, and the musical interest far more sustained; and altogether, though "Iphigénie en Tauride" can hardly be said to represent that ideal at which Gluck had been aiming all his life, it is a work of the utmost nobility and beauty.

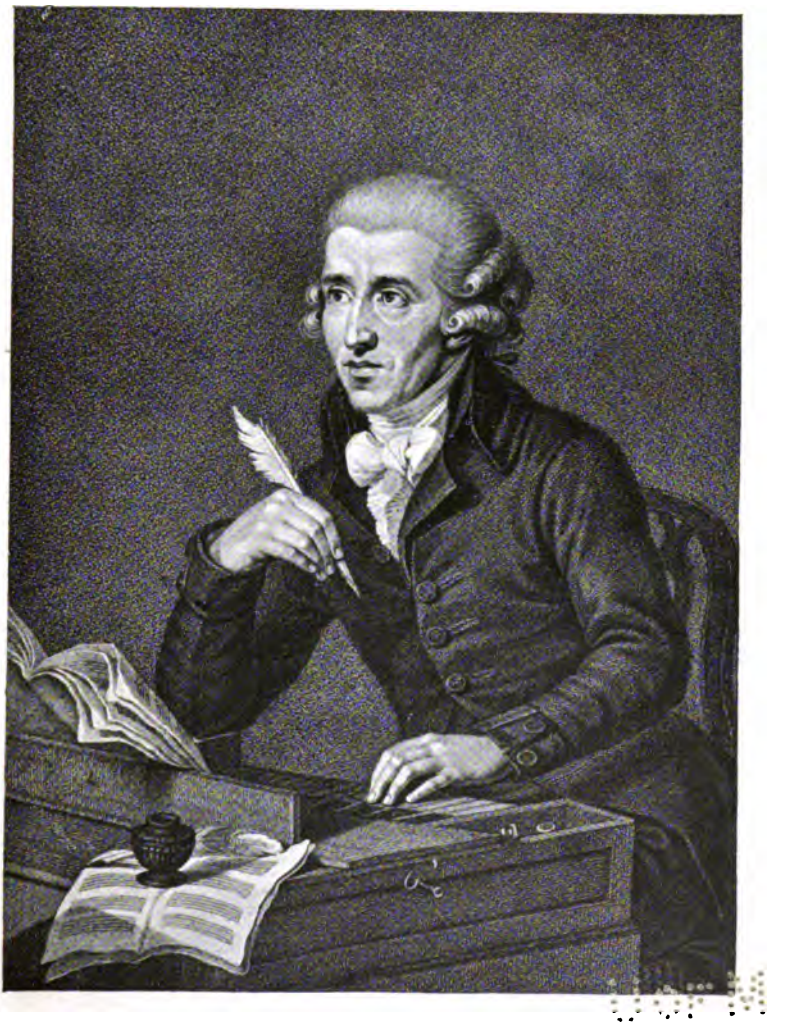
Whether that union of music and drama at which Gluck aimed can be counted among the possibilities of art is a question which it will be well to defer until the time comes to discuss Wagner and his theories. It is certain that Gluck did not attain it, but, like so many other pioneers, while missing the goal at which he aimed, he did perhaps more for the world than if he had achieved his wished-for end. His operas are certainly not music-dramas in the modern sense of the word, but as a practical protest against the slipshod fashions of the time they accomplished a most valuable work. Gluck, as I have already pointed out, was by no means the revolutionist that he is sometimes represented to be, and after his death his influence outside Paris and Vienna was curiously small. Yet even in Italy, where his direct influence was apparently insignificant, it is probable that his music had some effect in giving backbone and dignity to the too flexible productions of the composers of that period. Gluck is an interesting figure in other ways. He gives

musical expression to the great idea that was animating the world at his time—the return to Nature, so fervidly preached by Rousseau. In an art-form so essentially conventional as opera, it is obvious that the "return to Nature" could only be effected in a very modified form; and in this respect, as in many others, Gluck often did his best work rather in spite of his theories than because of them. It is significant, indeed, that the one opera of his which still retains a wide popularity, "Orfeo," holds its place on the stage almost entirely by its lyrical qualities, while those in which the dramatic element is especially prominent have passed into something very like oblivion. On the whole, the most important legacy that Gluck bequeathed to posterity was his conception of an opera as an artistic unity, not as a mere string of songs and dances often connected by the slightest of threads. He had the gift of suffusing each of his works in an atmosphere peculiar to itself, and this, with the noble dignity of his style, and his unfaltering worship of the loftiest artistic ideals, makes him a figure of singular importance in the history of opera, though the value of what he actually accomplished in the development of music has been curiously exaggerated.

CHAPTER VII

HAYDN

HAYDN'S position in the world of music is one that may be variously reckoned. Take the historical point of view, trace his influence upon the subsequent development of music, and he can hardly be ranked too high. Modern music owes him a debt that can never be over-estimated. He settled if he did not actually invent the forms which for a hundred years were accepted by composers of instrumental music as final. Not merely in matters of form was his influence all-important. The modern use of the orchestra as an instrument of picturesque expression is practically his invention. He settled its details, consolidated its structure, and employed it with a freedom and an independence that were entirely his own creation. But if we leave the merely historical attitude, and look upon Haydn as a man; if we isolate him from his predecessors and successors, and judge him simply by his own productions, our estimate will be far less high. As we find him in his music, what is he? A man of amiable disposition, facile, fluent in expression, avoiding by instinct the seamy side of things, a courtier and a man of the world. Haydn is the Horace of music; he charms by the



HAYDN

easy grace of his manner, by his geniality and tolerant optimism, but he makes no appeal to our deeper feelings; he is a frank Epicurean, making the best of life for himself and his friends, troubled by no obstinate questionings, harassed by no unattainable ideals. To some extent Haydn was unquestionably the child of circumstances, but even had he failed to reach the tranquil haven of complacent flunkeydom in which the greater part of his life was passed, it is hardly to be thought that he would have been very different from what he actually was. Wherever his lot had been cast he would have been cheerful, patient, and hopeful; the natural charm of his personality would never have deserted him, but nothing would have made a great man of Haydn.

Haydn, in his early struggles, is a figure that commands more respect than the Haydn of later days. Rarely has a musician had a more laborious march towards fame and fortune. He sprang from a sturdy race of Austrian peasants, with whom life was a constant struggle to keep the wolf from the door. The early days of his childhood were happy, for his father, who had himself a natural taste for music, noted the bent of the boy's mind, and encouraged him in the hope of some day becoming a musician. His mother wished him to be a priest or at least a schoolmaster, but the wisdom of his father prevailed, and a visit paid to the Haydn family by their cousin, Johann Mathias Frankh, the choirmaster of the neighbouring town of Hainburg,

finally settled the question of little "Sepperl's" career. Frankh tried his voice, recognised his musical instinct, and offered to take him back to Hainburg and train him with the other choristers. Haydn afterwards said that his childhood ended when he was six years old. His departure from home was the beginning for him of the battle of life. At Hainburg he got more kicks than halfpence, but chiefly by his own exertions he learnt a good deal about music; and when long afterwards he astonished Salomon's London orchestra by his skill as a drummer, he explained that during his Hainburg days he had taught himself how to play the drum, though he was too small to carry the drum himself in procession, and it had to be borne before him through the streets on the shoulders of a hunchback. But it was through his voice, which was singularly sweet in quality though far from powerful, that he owed his advancement from Hainburg. Reutter, the choirmaster of St Stephen's at Vienna, heard him sing, and, being in want of trebles for his own choir, carried him off to the metropolis. At St Stephen's he heard plenty of music, and had more than enough of vocal training; but from Reutter, no more than from Frankh, could he get what he most desired—lessons in the art of composition. So far as he could he taught himself. He covered every piece of music paper on which he could lay hands with attempts at anthems and masses, but the authorities gave him no encouragement, and even

sneered at his humble efforts when the latter fell into their hands. He had, however, some instruction on the violin, which he mastered well enough to be able to play a concerto, though, as he said himself, he was "no conjurer," and he had a little worm-eaten clavier of his own on which he practised incessantly, while his companions were busy with their games. Unfortunately a boy's voice is not immortal, and after a time Haydn's showed signs of breaking. The Empress Maria Theresa, who had at first been gracious enough to admire his voice, remarked with imperial jocularity that his singing resembled the crowing of a cock, and perhaps suggested that the inhuman operation by which in those days men were converted into singing-machines for the delectation of their aristocratic patrons, might be advantageously performed in Haydn's case. From this, however, he was saved by the intervention of his father, who came to Vienna for the express purpose of rescuing his son from so outrageous an injury. But Haydn's singing days were over. His younger brother Michael, who had entered the imperial choir in 1745, succeeded him as principal soloist, and a boyish escapade not worth recording furnished Reutter with an excuse for turning the elder brother into the streets without a penny to stand between him and starvation.

Haydn was too plucky to appeal to his parents. One friend gave him house-room for the moment, another lent him a few florins. He managed to

find one or two pupils, and with the pittance earned from them, and with what he picked up by fiddling at dances, he struggled through the winter. The turning-point in his fortunes was when he established himself in a garret in the house in which the poet Metastasio lived. Metastasio made friends with the young musician and introduced him to Porpora, the most famous teacher of singing in the world, and a composer whose operas had at one time threatened the supremacy of Handel in London, and at another that of Hasse at Dresden. Porpora was renowned for his churlishness and irritability, but he seems to have taken to Haydn, who on his side was willing to black Porpora's boots in return for such crumbs of instruction as fell from the great man's table. Porpora was at that time giving singing lessons to the mistress of the Venetian ambassador, and he took Haydn with him as accompanist. This introduction to the houses of the great speedily altered Haydn's fortunes for the better. He soon became in request at fashionable musical entertainments, and by degrees he gained pupils among the fine flower of the Viennese aristocracy, so that he ceased to feel the pinch of actual poverty. His position in the musical world, however, was not an august one. In Vienna at that time a musician, especially if only a humble accompanist, was to the giver of the feast merely one paid flunkey the more. He ate his meals with the servants, who, no doubt, taking the cue from their masters, treated him

with all the contempt they could muster. But Haydn found compensation in the society of his fellow-sufferers. He made acquaintance with many famous musicians, such as Wagenseil, Dittersdorf and Gluck, who recognised his talent, and gave him good advice as to his studies. Meanwhile he was still studying hard. He now could afford to buy books on the theory of music, and Porpora gave him occasional lessons, so that ere long he began to feel his feet as a composer. He wrote his first quartet in 1755 for a wealthy amateur named Fürnberg, who had taken him to stay at his country-house; he wrote his first symphony in 1759, shortly after being appointed Master of Music to a Bohemian nobleman, Count Morzin, who kept a private orchestra at his palace near Pilsen.

The ease and luxury of his position in Count Morzin's household—that of a servant with wages of some £20 a year—tempted Haydn to think of matrimony. The evil genius which has so often dogged musicians in the form of a wife, did not let slip so promising a victim. He had as pupils two sisters, the daughters of a wig-maker. He loved the younger, but the girl preferred the veil to marriage, and the father persuaded him to take the elder instead, who professed an infatuation for him. The marriage proved a complete failure; Haydn's wife was hard, bitter, shrewish and intolerant, caring, as he said, nothing whether her husband were an artist or a cobbler. After some

years of misery, a separation was arranged, and she faded from his life.

Soon after Haydn's marriage Count Morzin dismissed his band, and passed his Kapellmeister on to Prince Anton Esterhazy, who had heard and liked Haydn's symphonies at Pilsen, and appointed him second in command of his own orchestra under a musician named Werner, whom Haydn succeeded as chief Kapellmeister in 1766. Prince Anton died in 1762, and was succeeded by his brother Nicolaus, a good specimen of a noble eighteenth-century Mæcenas, for whom music was something more than an agreeable incentive to digestion.

For the next thirty years Haydn's life was tranquil and monotonous. It was passed almost entirely at Eisenstadt and Esterház, the Prince's two country seats, varied by occasional visits to Vienna, which became rarer as time went on, and as the Prince developed a more pronounced distaste for town life. Haydn's position in the Esterhazy household was that of an upper servant. He wore a livery, and presented himself daily in the ante-chamber to inquire whether his Highness pleased to order a performance of the orchestra. At first his salary was about £40, board and lodging included, which was afterwards almost doubled by the generosity of the Prince. His position was often irksome to him, less, it appears, from its dependence, than because it isolated him from the great world of music. Yet it had compensating

advantages. The excellent orchestra which he had at his disposal gave him every opportunity for acquiring command of orchestral effect, and to this, no doubt, is largely due the development of symphonic writing which is his chief claim to immortality. Yet the sluggish life of Esterház cannot but have reacted unfavourably upon his genius. Remote from rivalry, writing only for the ear of a Prince who was certain to be satisfied with anything put before him, Haydn can rarely have felt that stimulus to creation which a more active life and one spent in more congenial surroundings would have supplied. Yet it is impossible to blame the man if he preferred inglorious ease to a perpetual struggle for bare existence. In his young days he had known bitter privation, and it is no wonder that when comfort and competence were offered to him, he grasped them with both hands. Like Charles II. he retained too vivid a recollection of his early struggles ever willingly to go on his travels again. Yet go on his travels he did, and it was well for him that he decided to do so. In 1790 Prince Nicolaus died, and his successor, who did not care for music, at once disbanded his orchestra. Haydn was at liberty again, but in a very different position from that which he had occupied thirty years before. He had now a European reputation; his symphonies and quartets were known wherever music was played. He was the darling of Vienna, the idol of all the rising composers of the day; Mozart, indeed, looked up

to him as to a second father. He was rich, too, for the Esterhazys had behaved handsomely, and had given him a generous pension. Everything pointed to a quiet old age among his own people. But years of rustication had not left Haydn slothful or inactive. Often during his residence at Esterház he had received tempting offers from abroad to come and conduct his works. Cramer, the violinist, had offered him any sum he liked if he would appear at the Professional Concerts in London; Le Gros tried to induce him to come to Paris, where Cherubini was his devoted disciple. He had refused all offers, alleging his affection for his patron, whom he could not bring himself to desert. Now all objections were removed, and an offer to visit London from Salomon, who appeared at Vienna in person, found him willing to face the fatigue of a long journey and even to brave the horrors of the Channel. In 1790 he first visited England, and for the next five years the greater part of his time was spent there. He was received with the utmost enthusiasm and was entertained with lavish hospitality. In return he gave us the greatest works that he had yet composed, the twelve so-called "Salomon" symphonies and "The Creation," which, though not produced in England, was written to an English libretto, translated for Haydn's use by Baron van Swieten. Had Haydn died before his visit to England, his position in the history of music as the father of the quartet and the symphony would have been secure, but as a

composer he would scarcely be known to the present generation. It is chiefly by his "Salomon" symphonies and "The Creation" that he lives in the active world of music, and it is impossible for Englishmen not to feel that they have had a share in securing the immortality of this great man.

Haydn's English triumphs established his position in the world of music more firmly than ever. After his return to Vienna he reigned as undisputed monarch. Mozart was dead, and Beethoven's star had but just arisen. There was no one to challenge Haydn's supremacy. But advancing age had laid its hand upon him. After the production of his second oratorio "The Seasons" in 1801 he was rarely seen outside his own house. His last public appearance was at a performance of "The Creation" in 1808, to which he was carried in an arm-chair. In the following year he died, full of years and honours.

I have already spoken of the vast debt that modern music owes to Haydn. Standing as he does between Bach on the one hand and Beethoven on the other, he is the link between the old world and the new. In his young days he studied especially the works of Emanuel Bach, who had inherited the traditions of his mighty father, and had further developed the musical forms bequeathed to him. Emanuel Bach is reported to have said that Haydn alone comprehended his works, and whether the story be apocryphal or not, it is plain that Haydn comprehended them to the extent

of bringing to flower what in Emanuel Bach is only bud. But explain as we will the musical pedigree of Haydn, there remains a chasm between his predecessors and himself that only genius could bridge, and that he did bridge this chasm will keep his memory green even when his music is forgotten. If Haydn's instrumental music proves him the descendant of Bach, his oratorios are no less plainly derived from Handel. But here a difference is to be noted. Bach left instrumental music a lusty and growing child, but still in its cradle. In oratorio, so far as the form that he cultivated was concerned, Handel had spoken the last word. After him there remained nothing but to imitate, or to strike into a totally new channel. Haydn did both; so far as he reproduced the style and methods of Handel he is for the most part flabby and colourless; his choruses lack breadth and dignity, his solos are pretty when they should be sublime. In the orchestra, however, he did new and valuable work; his attempted realism often provokes a smile, but much of his descriptive writing is important from its freshness and sincerity. It is impossible for anyone who recognises the epic character of true oratorio not to feel that "The Creation" is a step towards decadence, but it marks an epoch in the history of that branch of musical form, and, though its gradual disappearance from the modern repertory is on strictly artistic grounds scarcely to be regretted, it will always be heard with interest by students of the development

of music. "The Seasons" is musically a better work than "The Creation," though its ludicrous libretto keeps it out of modern concert-rooms. There is far less imitation of Handel in it, and much more of the real Haydn, with his love of all things great and small, his cheery optimism and his frank delight in life. But it is in his instrumental works that we get nearest to the man himself. I have spoken perhaps somewhat slightingly of his quartets and symphonies from the purely artistic point of view, and it must be confessed that there are times when Haydn with his serene flow of happy contentment and his child-like determination to ignore the seamy side of life acts like a powerful irritant upon the spirits. Yet there are times again when one is inclined to thank Heaven that so brave, modest and pious a man ever trod this earth. Haydn had a profoundly optimistic mind. In his youth he passed through the Valley of Humiliation, but the elasticity of his spirit was proof against all trials. There is nothing in his music to tell of the privations that we know he endured. In the haven of Esterház he seems to have forgotten the storms of Vienna. A man of this type engages our sympathies more acutely in his troubles than in his triumphs. Mark Tapley was something very like a hero in the swamps of America, but his career after he married the buxom hostess of the "Dragon" and settled down in her bar-parlour was quite the reverse of stimulating.

What Haydn did with regard to the development

of musical form was so important that it has been allowed partially to obscure his achievements in other directions. He is often called the father of the quartet and the symphony, but he might with almost equal justice be called the father of programme music. There was of course programme music in a sense before his days; in fact from the earliest times composers had been in the habit of attempting crude imitations of the sights and sounds of nature, the notes of birds, the sound of thunder and so forth; and even the mighty Bach unbent so far as to write a little harpsichord piece illustrative of the departure of a brother. But the introduction to "The Creation," which is described as a "Representation of Chaos," is far more elaborate than anything that had been previously accomplished in this direction, and no doubt had a powerful influence upon the subsequent development of orchestral music. More important still is Haydn's attitude towards what is usually called the poetic basis of music; for nowadays programme music, in the baser sense of the word, that is the depiction of actual incidents, has been carried to such a ludicrous extent (as in Dvořák's symphonic poem "Der Wassermann," in which a merman throws a baby against a cottage door, an event solemnly illustrated by a stroke on the big drum) that it has brought about its own condemnation, while the theory of a poetic basis to music has gradually come to be accepted by all save the most obstinate reactionaries. We have the authority of one of Haydn's

biographers for the information that, when he was about to compose, "he imagined a little romance which might furnish him with musical sentiments and colours." To some of his works Haydn gave titles indicating the general drift of the ideas which they represent. Thus among his early symphonies we find one called "Morning," and another "Noontide," and another "Evening," the last movement of which is a musical description of a storm. Others again are "The Schoolmaster in Love," "The Philosopher," and "The Chase." There is very little in these works that can be called actually descriptive, in the sense in which so much modern programme music is descriptive, but it is easy enough as a rule to follow the development of the composer's idea. The "Noontide" symphony, for instance, begins plainly enough with a bustling, active morning, followed by the hour of mid-day repose. It is well to lay stress upon the important part which a poetic basis plays in Haydn's music, since he is usually quoted as a standard instance of a composer who regarded instrumental music as simply the art of making beautiful sound-patterns. It is, to say the least of it, a curious comment upon the position of the advocates of "abstract" as opposed to "poetic" music, that the father of the symphony should also be, in a very real sense, the father of the symphonic poem. If Haydn is tinged with the "poetic" heresy, who, we may well exclaim, is pure? The fact is, and the sooner the opponents of "poetic" music realise it the better, that it is as

impossible to compose music worthy of the name without a poetic basis, as it would be to paint a picture without a subject. The composer may label his work or not just as he likes. He has the same liberty that a painter has to withhold the source of his inspiration from the public, but the source is there just the same. His music need not represent anything like a programme, it may be nothing but the picture of a certain train of thought or even of a mood, but some foundation it must have, unless we are to degrade musicians to the level of spiders, hanging in the void upon threads spun from their own stomachs.

MOZART

CHAPTER VIII

MOZART

NOTHING in the history of music is more pathetic than the story of Mozart's career. It is the frequent lot of gifted men to fight their way from obscurity to fame. Often do we read of early struggles with poverty and lack of appreciation rewarded by final triumph. Of this Haydn's career, as has been shown, is a typical instance. With Mozart, however, the usual conditions were reversed. At an age when most children are playing in the nursery, or thumbing their grammars, Mozart enjoyed a European reputation. He was petted by royal princesses, extolled by musicians, and applauded by the crowd. But as his genius developed, and as he grew from infant-prodigydom into his incomparable manhood, his popularity steadily decreased, till it flickered out in an obscure death and a pauper's grave. Time has brought Mozart his revenge. While his successful contemporary Haydn is now little more than a great name in musical history, imposing from his influence upon the subsequent developments of the art, but with no individual message to the men of a later age, Mozart's voice speaks as clearly and as sweetly to us as it ever did. Undimmed

by the mists of gathering years, his works still shine as the ideal of serene perfection, nor is it possible to conceive a time when changed fashions will so alter the standard of taste that their faultless beauty will not move the souls of men as it moves them now.

The story of Mozart's wonderful childhood has been told so often that it will not be necessary to do more than briefly recount its main incidents. He was born on the 27th of January 1756, at Salzburg. His father was an accomplished musician, who held various musical posts at the court of the Archbishop of Salzburg. Fortunately he early discerned the astonishing gifts of his little son, and devoted himself loyally to their cultivation, even to the length of resigning his official position. By the time he was three years old Mozart showed signs of musical precocity. He would try to imitate upon the harpischord everything that he heard his sister Marianne play, and when his father, seeing the boy's talent, began to teach him how to play, he found that the little prodigy learnt everything that was put before him as if by inspiration. He began to compose minuets too in imitation of those which his father copied out for him to learn. In the Mozart Museum at Salzburg the little book of manuscript music is preserved with which Mozart's first lessons were conducted. It begins with some easy minuets by various composers, copied by Mozart's father. On one page is the following

note: "The preceding minuets were learnt by my little Wolfgang in his fourth year." A little further on is a piece by Wolfgang himself, signed and dated on the 11th of May 1762.

The remarkable accomplishments of his children —for Marianne, who was born in 1751, was also a gifted musician—tempted their father to seek a wider field for their talents, and in 1762 their travels began. They went first to Munich and next visited Vienna, where the Emperor and Empress received them with the utmost kindness, and where the infant genius of Mozart turned the heads of all the court. With all his precocity Mozart was a thorough boy, and there are many charming stories told of his childish games with the youthful archduchesses, particularly with Marie Antoinette, the future Queen of France, who was his especial favourite. After Vienna came Paris, where the tale of triumph was renewed, and after Paris, London. In London Mozart reached the zenith of his childish fame. His extraordinary powers were recognised and applauded by rich and poor, by small and great. At the court and in the city, in theatres and concert-rooms, in London and in the provinces, he won all hearts by the boyish charm of his manner no less than by the wonders of his musical accomplishment. The Mozarts stayed in England from April 1764 until July 1765, when finding that his youthful prodigies no longer attracted the attention that they commanded at

first, Leopold Mozart took them to Holland, and home by Paris and Switzerland. They reached Salzburg in November 1766, delighted to find themselves at home once more after their protracted travels. By this time the number of Mozart's compositions had reached a respectable figure. In England he had written some orchestral symphonies which had been performed in public, and at many of his stopping-places he had produced other works of less importance, some of which had been published. At Salzburg he returned to his studies with renewed ardour, though these were interrupted by occasional visits to Vienna. The patronage of the Archbishop of Salzburg induced Mozart to compose a good deal of church music, and his two first operas "La Finta Semplice" and "Bastien und Bastienne" also date from this period. In 1769 father and son left Salzburg for Italy, where their journey was as much of a triumphal progress as had been their visits to Paris and London. Everywhere Mozart met with enthusiasm. Verona, Milan, Bologna, Rome, Naples, Florence, Venice and many other cities welcomed them in turn. At Bologna Padre Martini, the greatest contrapuntist of the age, set the seal of his approval upon the young musician's scholarship. At Rome Mozart astonished the connoisseurs by writing out Allegri's famous "Miserere" from memory after a single hearing; and at Milan he produced an opera "Mitridate," which threw the works of native

musicians into the shade, and caused Hasse, himself one of the most popular of living composers, to predict that Mozart would cause them all to be forgotten. After these triumphs the humdrum life at Salzburg seemed doubly irksome; yet Salzburg, varied by occasional visits to Italy, Munich and Vienna, remained Mozart's headquarters until he reached his twenty-first year. The old Archbishop had been succeeded in 1772 by Hieronymus von Colloredo, who though he professed a great appreciation for music, was a hard taskmaster to Mozart. He had appointed Mozart his "Concert-meister," a post, which although no salary appears to have been attached to it, involved the composition of an immense amount of music for the festivals of the Church. Mozart's facility was so extraordinary that this gave him comparatively little trouble, but he was disheartened in his work by the steady refusal of the Archbishop to recognise his genius. It was hard for a youth who had had all Italy at his feet, and who had earned the approbation of the greatest musicians of the age, to be told by an ignorant prelate that he did not know how to compose. It is not surprising that his Salzburg church music is perhaps less impressive than anything else that he wrote, and that after some years of this drudgery he should have felt that a life at the beck and call of such a Philistine as Hieronymus was intolerable. In 1777 he demanded and obtained his discharge, and turned his back upon Salzburg, though to his great

grief he was compelled to leave his father behind him.

Mozart's newly found freedom did not benefit him materially. He proposed to visit Paris, but lingered on his way thither for several months at Mannheim, detained by the attractions of the Elector's orchestra, which was then the best in Europe, and the beauty of Aloysia Weber, the daughter of an old friend of his father, with whom he had fallen in love. He taught Aloysia singing, wrote songs for her and proposed to take her to Italy, but the latter scheme was violently opposed by his father. When Mozart at last reached Paris he found that the musical public had wholly forgotten the precocious boy who had delighted them fifteen years before, and was given up heart and soul to the quarrels between Gluck and Piccinni. Mozart met with little but discouragement, and his troubles were increased by the death of his mother, who had been his companion in his travels. There was evidently nothing to be gained by staying in Paris, and he decided to return to Salzburg, which he reached in June 1779. There he fell once more into the clutches of the Archbishop, and resumed the dreary task of providing music for his court and ecclesiastical festivals. As a relief to this came a commission from Munich to write an opera for the Court theatre. "Idomeneo," which was produced in 1781, placed Mozart at the head of living composers. It shows traces of Gluck's influence harmoniously combined with the Italian traditions in which Mozart had

been trained, but its real strength lies in the treatment of the chorus and orchestra, which was something entirely new and original, and was in the truest sense the foundation of the modern school of opera. From his triumph at Munich Mozart was summoned to Vienna by the inevitable Archbishop, who was established there with his court, but Mozart's powers of endurance were almost exhausted. In spite of his European reputation the Archbishop continued to treat him like a servant, forbade him to play outside the walls of his palace, and within them treated him with studied insolence. This, no doubt, was what many composers of the time endured without a murmur, but Mozart's independent spirit could not put up with such a state of servitude. After a final interview in which the Archbishop loaded him with the most vile and vulgar abuse Mozart turned his back upon his prison for ever. "I will never more have anything to do with Salzburg," he wrote to his father, "and I hate the Archbishop almost to fury." Mozart was thus thrown upon his own resources, and had to subsist as he could by giving lessons and concerts. Still he was free, and from this time forth, though his worldly circumstances were at all times uncertain and often desperate, he poured forth a succession of masterpieces which completely threw into the shade the works that he produced during his period of slavery. When he left the Archbishop he lodged at first with his old friends the Webers, who were established in Vienna. Aloysia had not kept

faith with him, and had married a man named Lange, but her place in Mozart's affections was taken by her younger sister Constanze, whom he married in 1782. Their married life was happy, but unfortunately Constanze was as poor a manager as regards money matters as Mozart himself, and did little to lighten the burden of continual impecuniosity which weighed upon Mozart's later years. The same year saw the production of the second of his mature operas, "Die Entführung aus dem Serail," which won much success, but seems to have brought little profit to the composer. Meanwhile, Mozart was in great request as a concert-performer, particularly in the houses of the leaders of Viennese society. The Emperor often heard him, and never failed to express admiration for his talents. It is curious that this general popularity did not result in Mozart's receiving any fixed appointment, which the Emperor might easily have given him had he cared to do so. Probably Mozart's independent spirit was responsible for this. The man who, when the Emperor said to him *à propos* of "Die Entführung," "Too fine for our ears, my dear Mozart, and far too many notes," could reply, "Exactly as many notes as are necessary, your Majesty," was not of the stuff of which a complaisant courtier is made. However, even the Emperor did not find fault with Mozart's next opera, "Le Nozze di Figaro," which was produced at Vienna in 1786, and was received with unbounded enthusiasm, though it was speedily supplanted in the favour of the fickle

Viennese public by two pieces, the very names of which only survive in this connection, Dittersdorf's "Doktor und Apotheker," and Martini's "La Cosa rara." At Prague, on the other hand, the public was more constant, and Mozart was induced by friends to go thither in order to see for himself how popular his music was. He went and conducted a performance of "Figaro," and played at several concerts, and was so delighted with his reception that he promised to compose an opera for the Prague theatre. This in due course he did, and "Don Giovanni" was received there in October 1787 with the most rapturous delight. In Vienna the work was less popular. The Emperor said of it, "It is not meat for my Viennese," but, fearing that Mozart's successes in the provinces might tempt him to leave the capital, he grudgingly appointed him Kammer-compositor at the princely salary of 800 gulden (£80). The chief duty attached to the post was to write dance music for the imperial balls, and when he heard what his income was to be Mozart said bitterly, "It is too much for what I produce, and too little for what I could produce." Though still in such straits for money that he often had to appeal to friends for a loan, Mozart relaxed nothing of his activity; in fact, the more deeply he was plunged in debt and distress, the more brilliantly did his genius assert itself.

A trip to Berlin produced an offer from King Frederick William II. of the post of Court Kapellmeister, with a salary of about £600, but this Mozart

refused at the entreaty of his own Emperor, though the latter, even after this proof of devotion, made no effort to provide him with a suitable income.

In February 1790 the Emperor died, dealing a last blow to Mozart in his death, for the latter's latest opera, "Così fan tutte," had just been produced, and the mourning for the Emperor put a stop to its performance. His successor Leopold was even less of a friend to music than Joseph had been, and Mozart's affairs fell from bad to worse. Mozart must have regretted deeply that his quixotic affection for the late Emperor had impelled him to refuse the King of Prussia's offer. What the world has lost by that refusal, it is idle to speculate. Had Mozart moved to Berlin instead of remaining at Vienna, he might have been spared to music for many years, but the offer seems not to have been renewed. In March 1791, in response to a request made by his actor friend Schikaneder that he would collaborate with him in a magic opera, he began upon "Die Zauberflöte." The work was destined to be twice interrupted, first by a visit from a mysterious stranger, subsequently ascertained to be Count Walsegg, who commissioned him to write a Requiem; and secondly, by a request from his favourite city of Prague, that he would compose an opera to be performed at the coronation of Leopold II. The latter, "La Clemenza di Tito," was hastily written, when the composer was already sickening for his death, and is not worthy of his genius; the Requiem he left unfinished, and it was

completed by his pupil Süssmayer, who followed the instructions given him by Mozart upon his deathbed. The mysterious circumstances that attended the commission of the Requiem weighed heavily upon the dying musician's spirits. He believed the unknown stranger to be a messenger from another world, and felt certain that he was writing the Requiem for himself. In reality the matter was simple enough. Walsegg was an amateur who wished to be thought a great composer, and he intended to pass the Requiem off as his own work; indeed, it is said that he did actually have it performed under his own name. In spite of these interruptions "Die Zauberflöte" was duly finished and produced on the 30th of September. Its success was enormous, and Mozart's last hours were cheered by accounts of its increasing popularity. He died on Dec. 5, 1791, of malignant typhus fever, and was buried in the midst of a storm, which gave the few mourners who were present at the funeral service an excuse for not following the hearse to the churchyard. His body was laid in the common paupers' grave.

Mozart has been called the Raphael of music, and the name is perhaps as expressive a one as can be found to sum up the prevailing characteristics of his genius. No composer has ever had so passionate a devotion to beauty allied to so unerring a sense of form. It has been said that it was a physical impossibility for Mozart to write ugly music. That may be so, but we have first

to define what ugly music is, a task which any one who is old enough to remember having heard "Die Meistersinger" described as a "carnival of cacophony" may prefer to decline.

What may safely be said is that Mozart's music never gives the most fleeting impression of ugliness by reason of his perfect grasp of the secrets of musical architecture. He gains his effects by subtle contrasts, not by violent juxtapositions. This command of form, this sense of proportion was instinctive in him, as indeed the grasp of the loftiest mysteries of art must be instinctive. But this instinctive sense of form, important as it is in conjunction with other gifts, is very far from containing the secret of Mozart's marvellous talent.

Mozart is Mozart by virtue of the exquisite tenderness and charm of his nature, which breathes from every bar of his music. Never has a more delicate soul been cast upon the tender mercy of a cruel world. There is something in the childlike freshness of Mozart's nature, in his beautiful sympathy not only for the nobler aspirations of humanity, but also for its weaknesses and foibles, which has a pathos that is beyond tears. That this man should have been buffeted through life by boors and hounded at last into a nameless grave is one of the tragedies of musical history.

Mozart's facility of composition was unequalled, and the amount of work that he got through during the thirty-six years of his life was prodigious. It

must be remembered that a good deal of his music was written when he was a boy—a boy of genius, it is true, but still of an age when nothing but clever reproduction of the ideas of others could be expected from him—and that another considerable fraction was produced to order, and to the order of a man whom he hated. This too may be conveniently neglected in summing up his life's work. There remains a body of work of such marvellous strength and beauty and exhibiting such varied gifts that the world is still in doubt as to whether Mozart is greatest in orchestral or chamber music, in sacred music or in opera. One thing is certain, that the composer of the six quartets dedicated to Haydn, the symphonies in E flat, G minor, and the "Jupiter," the "Requiem," "Figaro," "Don Giovanni," and "Die Zauberflöte," whatever branch of music be under consideration, must stand in the very front rank of the world's musicians. Mozart's position in the history of the quartet, and even more so in that of the symphony, is rather a curious one. He found the form perfected by Haydn; he took it and infused into it a power of thought and a vigour of expression that were far beyond Haydn's reach, and handed it back to his master, who profited so far by Mozart's achievements that, as regards his symphonies at any rate, he now lives chiefly by the works that he produced under the influence of the younger man. Haydn's symphonies express, so far as they express anything, his honest, good-humoured acceptance of life as it is, untinged by

any complexity of thought or profundity of emotion. Mozart first touched music with what I may briefly call the modern spirit. He made it the vehicle of direct emotional expression, not necessarily the expression of personal emotion, for his range of thought was so wide and his sympathies were so universal that he seems to be the spokesman of the world at large rather than to be lifting the veil from his own private feelings. It is impossible to hear, let us say, the G minor symphony without feeling that once for all instrumental music had been emancipated from its old-time condition of mere "Tafel-Musik," a pleasing concourse of sounds put together to aid the digestion of a dyspeptic nobleman. For better, for worse, it must henceforth rank with other art-forms as a means of expressing all that is highest and noblest in the soul of man.

I have spoken chiefly of Mozart's symphonies, but I would not have it thought that in his other orchestral works there are not treasures of beauty and grandeur, in fact it rarely happens that one of his minor works is revived without impressing its hearers with new wonder at the limitless range of the composer's genius. Recently his little "Maurerische Trauermusik," a piece written for the funeral of a brother Freemason, has been repeatedly played in London. This deserves special mention in connection with what I have already ventured to say with regard to a composer's attitude towards death being as it were a standard of his mental

stature. It has that restraint and dignity, that manliness and courage which I have already pointed out in similar works by Handel and Bach. It is a musical counterpart to a famous letter from Mozart to his father which appears to me to be so beautiful and so fully expressive of the true nobility of his nature that I cannot forbear from quoting it: "As death, strictly speaking, is the true end and aim of our lives, I have for the last two years made myself so well acquainted with this true, best friend of mankind, that his image no longer terrifies, but calms and consoles me. And I thank God for giving me the opportunity (you understand) of learning to look upon death as the key which unlocks the gate of true happiness. I never lie down to rest without thinking that, young as I am, before the dawn of another day I may be no more, and yet no one who knows me would call me morose or discontented. For this blessing I thank my Creator every day, and wish from my heart that I could share it with all my fellow-men."

In Mozart's chamber music the same emancipating influence is felt. He clothed the Haydnesque form with new and marvellous raiment, not merely in his string quartets, but in the works written for novel combinations of instruments, such as the clarinet quintet, the quintet for wind and piano, and his many works for various groups of wind instruments. In the latter he enlarged the borders of chamber music in an extraordinary manner, his marvellous knowledge of the special

quality of each instrument guiding him with unerring certainty. His works for wind instruments are totally different in style from those written for strings. There is something colossal, something almost superhuman (to take one instance) about his great serenade in C minor for hautboys, clarinets, horns and bassoons. It moves with a deliberate solemnity that seems to belong to a different world from that of his works for strings with their quick play of chequered feeling. In all his music Mozart's feeling for orchestral effect was astounding. In his day this clarinet was a new instrument, but he divined its capabilities with inspired sagacity. No one has written for it as he has; but Mozart's mastery of orchestration has passed into a proverb, and though modern composers with their far more extended resources may call his scores slight, they dare not call them monotonous or ineffective.

From the modern point of view, Mozart's pianoforte works are not so interesting as much that he has left us, though their place in the history of music is none the less important. The development of technique has helped to shelve them, though pianists still say that, in spite of its apparent simplicity, a Mozart concerto is as severe a test of good playing as can be found. Still more have they been affected by the improvement in the manufacture of pianofortes. Mozart wrote for an instrument which, though bearing the same name, really belonged to a different world from that of our modern pianos. On a "concert

grand" it is practically impossible to realise the delicate effects that Mozart had in view.

Mozart's sacred music, if viewed as a whole, must be relegated to a lower place in the catalogue of his works than perhaps any other branch of his music. A great deal of it was written at Salzburg in compliance with the orders of the hated Archbishop, and it is not surprising that in these circumstances the composer's heart was not in his work. Yet even when working against the grain and for a cause which cannot have excited his sympathy, Mozart could not help being Mozart. Much of his church music gives an impression of extreme facility, and of having been written with no very profound conviction save that the composer would be very pleased when he got to the end of his task; but there is hardly one of his masses, litanies or vespers that does not contain something fine and noble, some exquisite melody in which the very soul of the composer seems to be poured forth in sound, or some grand chorus in which all the resources of music are employed to build up an edifice of glorious sublimity. But it is in the sacred music of his later years that we find the true Mozart, in works like the Requiem, the Mass in C minor, which he left unfinished at his death, and which has lately been published by Herr Alois Schmidt with the missing movements supplied by adaptation from Mozart's other works, and, perhaps most beautiful of all, the exquisite little "Ave Verum," a work as pure and tender in inspiration as a motet by

Palestrina. These are the works to which we must turn if we want to know what Mozart could do in the field of sacred music. In the Requiem Mozart measures himself against the great masters of an earlier generation, and comes gloriously from the encounter. His music has a breadth and dignity of style worthy of Bach or Handel, allied to a poignancy of expression that suggests a later age. Simple as are the means he employs compared with the elaborate resources of modern composers, such as Verdi and Gounod, his picture of the unearthly terrors of the Judgment Day remains unequalled in its thrilling intensity, while the human elements of the scene are treated with that tenderness and divine sympathy of which he alone had the secret.

Great as Mozart proved himself in everything which he touched, it is in his operas that he makes the surest appeal to modern hearers. No lapse of time nor change of fashion can dim the lustre of these marvellous works. We find him first as a mature artist in "Idomeneo" (1781), and for the next ten years he gained steadily in range of vision and in power of expression, until his career culminated in "Die Zauberflöte." In Mozart's operatic career two influences work side by side, the Italian and the German. We find him in his childish days writing first an Italian operetta, "La Finta Semplice," for Salzburg, and then a German one, "Bastien und Bastienne," for Vienna. So having idealised Italian opera in "Idomeneo," and

endowed it with a wealth of orchestral colour and a richness of concerted music of which Italy had never dreamed, he turned to his native tongue, and in "Die Entführung aus dem Serail" practically laid the foundation upon which the imposing edifice of modern German opera has been constructed. In this work we find the first suggestion of what was one of Mozart's greatest gifts, his unequalled power of characterisation. Mozart's characters live in their music like the creations of one of our great novelists. In music he reveals to us every thought as plainly as if we were reading a printed page.

If this is true of "Die Entführung," much more is it true of "Le Nozze di Figaro," in which Mozart's art exalted a tale of artificial and at times unpleasant intrigue into one of the great music dramas of the world. Here for the first time we find Mozart with his panoply complete. What a set of puppets the characters in "Figaro" are! Hardly one of them merits our affection, certainly not our esteem. Yet the enchanter breathes life into them, and we follow the mazy entanglements of their plots and counterplots with a delight that never tires. If there is one quality more than another in which Mozart excels all other composers, it is his power of characterisation. Each one of his people stands out perfect and distinct, a type realised with infinite knowledge of humanity, and drawn with unfailing certainty of touch. One might call Mozart the Dickens of

music, if he were not so much greater than Dickens in almost every possible way. But that one faculty the two men shared, the faculty of limning a character in a few dexterous touches and sustaining it tirelessly through every changing stroke of fortune. Unlike Dickens, Mozart is never a caricaturist. He has the infinite tenderness of infinite wisdom. It is in that sympathy with the fault and follies of poor human nature that the supreme charm of his personality lies. Behind the dancing puppets one sees the sad-eyed enchanter with his wan face and pitying smile. Greater even than "Figaro" is "Don Giovanni," for here the canvas is broader and the passions are nobler. The libretto of "Don Giovanni" is not dramatic in the usual theatrical sense, but for operatic purposes it has rarely been surpassed. It deals almost entirely with emotion, which music interprets so well, and hardly at all with incident, which music interprets so badly or rather cannot interpret at all. "Don Giovanni" ranges over the whole gamut of human feeling. From the buffoonery of Leporello to the supernatural terrors of the closing scene is a wide step, but Mozart's touch never falters. One can hardly say the characterisation is more perfect than in "Figaro," but in "Don Giovanni" the contrasts are more striking and the master's brush takes a wider sweep. What, for instance, could be finer than his differentiation of the three women: Anna, the noble virgin, strong in the ardour of her passionate chastity; Elvira, the loving trusting

wife, with whom to know all is to pardon all; and Zerlina, an embodiment of rustic coquetry? Never for a moment does Mozart lose his grip of the initial conception of his characters, though his inimitable art blends their different idiosyncrasies into an artistic whole of serene and perfect beauty. In "Così fan tutte" we are again in the world of "Figaro"; this gay and brilliant little work, after a period of unmerited neglect, is now on the way to regain the favour that it deserves.

"La Clemenza di Tito," which was hastily written while Mozart was in poor health was, comparatively speaking, a failure. The dull old-fashioned libretto not unnaturally failed to inspire the composer, who produced a work which seems a curious return to the earlier style of Italian *opera seria*, rather than an advance upon the lines indicated in Mozart's previous works. It was said at the time by a good critic that "Tito" might have been taken for the first attempt of budding talent rather than for the product of a mature mind. In "Die Zauberflöte" Mozart produced what many distinguished persons, including Beethoven and Goethe, have pronounced to be his masterpiece. The libretto, which is a curious compound of fantastic imagination and buffoonery, is usually taken to be an allegorical presentment of the triumph of Freemasonry. Undoubtedly the masonic element counts for a good deal, but behind this the discerning hearer will perceive the outlines of an allegory nobler in

substance and loftier in scope, the ascent of the human soul, purified by trial, to the highest wisdom. Mozart's music is amazing in its many-coloured beauty, and in the imaginative splendour by means of which it clothes scenes and situations of all kinds with a garment of romance.

"Die Zauberflöte" is in a sense a summing up of Mozart's genius. The range of thought is tremendous, and whatever the nature of the scene Mozart paints it with unerring touch. The lighter parts of the opera are the very incarnation of irresponsible gaiety, and in the solemn scenes the composer rises to unknown heights of sublimity. Over all the work hangs a mysterious atmosphere of poetical imagination, through which we discern figures walking, as it were, in a golden haze. I know not if "Die Zauberflöte" has ever been compared to "The Tempest," but to me it seems that the two crowning works of Mozart and Shakespeare have much in common. Not only is Sarastro a tolerably close counterpart of Prospero, while Tamino and Pamina may stand for Ferdinand and Miranda, but the attitude to life, if I may call it so, of the two works is curiously alike. Both deal with a tale of the most fantastic imagination, under cover of which the author wrestles with the profoundest problems of human existence. In both there is that breadth of view that comes from a mind risen above the petty troubles of earth, that serene wisdom born of ripe experience and a knowledge of good and

evil, and that supreme mastery of craftsmanship to which only the greatest can attain. In each the master magician of his time bade farewell to the scene that his genius had enriched. "Die Zauberflöte" fitly closed Mozart's career. What that career was, and what its value has been to the world at large, may best be summed up in Gounod's eloquent words: "O Mozart, divine Mozart! How little do they know thee, who do not adore thee—thee, who art eternal truth, perfect beauty, inexhaustible charm, profound yet ever limpid, all humanity with the simplicity of a child—who hast felt everything and expressed everything in a musical language that has never been and never will be surpassed!"

CHAPTER IX

BEETHOVEN

ONE day in the summer of 1787, when Mozart was busy with "Don Giovanni," which was to be produced at Prague in October, he was asked by a friend to hear a young pianist who had come to Vienna from Bonn in the hope of gaining a footing in what was then the German metropolis of music. Mozart's time was precious, but he was too good-natured to refuse, and he went to his friend's house at the time appointed. The aspirant to musical fame was an ugly, shock-headed boy of seventeen, ill dressed and awkward in manner. Mozart asked him to play something, which he did. The great man listened politely, waiting for the signs of genius which he had been told to expect, but he had much to think about just then, and his attention wandered. Frankly, he was bored and probably a little annoyed with his friend for wasting his time in this way. The pianist stopped, and Mozart rose to go, probably saying a few words of kindly encouragement and advice. But the boy was not to be put off so. He knew that he had not done himself justice, and he was determined to show what was in him. He took his courage in both hands and begged Mozart to

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give him a subject to improvise upon. Mozart, who was amiability itself, did as he was asked and the boy began. This was a very different story. The boy was on his mettle, and all his shyness and nervousness disappeared as if by magic. He played like one inspired, and at the end of the *séance* Mozart, completely won, said to his friend: "Pay attention to him; he will make a noise in the world some day or other." Mozart never saw the boy again, but his prophecy came true, for the boy was Ludwig van Beethoven.

Beethoven's three months' visit to Vienna, during which this incident took place, was one of the few bright spots in his dreary boyhood. He was born at Bonn in December 1770, the son of a ne'er-do-well singer in the Court chapel of the Elector of Cologne.

Johann van Beethoven's salary was a mere pittance, and his drunken habits made him the terror of his family, but he was enough of a musician to recognise his son's talent, and he gave him what musical instruction he could. As the boy grew older he picked up further scraps of musical knowledge from some of his father's associates, and when he was eleven years old he became a pupil of Neefe, a sound musician, who had been appointed Court organist, and who speedily found an employment for Beethoven's talents by allowing the latter to relieve him of some of his own duties. So between hard blows at home and hard work abroad the youthful genius grew from childhood to boy-

hood, living on the barest necessaries of life, serious beyond his years and with little inclination for boyish games and amusements. By the time he was thirteen he was deputy organist in one of the Bonn churches and accompanist at the rehearsals of the Court Opera, but he does not appear to have been paid for his work in either capacity. He began composing too, three sonatas of his being published in 1781 or 1782, followed in 1785 by some quartets for piano and strings and other works, none of which contains any indication of what he was subsequently to become. In 1787 came the above-mentioned trip to Vienna, probably given him as a treat by the Elector. From this he returned to the bedside of his dying mother. Her death, followed closely by that of her baby daughter, seems to have plunged Beethoven's father into fresh excesses of intemperance, and shortly afterwards a decree was issued that his salary should be paid direct to his son, who thus at the age of nineteen became practically the head of the family and responsible for the bringing-up and education of his two brothers. Right manfully did he discharge his task. It was not for nothing that Beethoven was born with the squarest of square jaws. Determination and perseverance were marked features of his character, and from his earliest youth they had full play. However, brighter days were in store for him. His remarkable talents were now generally recognised, and they brought him kind and appreciative friends

such as Count Waldstein, to whom one of his most famous pianoforte sonatas was afterwards dedicated, and the Breuning family, who, apart from occasional quarrels due to Beethoven's sensitive nature, remained his trusty friends through life. In 1792 the death of his worthless father removed a hideous burden from his young shoulders, and in the same year a visit from Haydn to Bonn turned the scale of his fortunes. Haydn was returning to Vienna from London and stayed for some days at Bonn, where he was fêted in a manner due to the most famous composer of the day. Beethoven submitted a cantata to him, which met with the great man's warm approval, so much so indeed that he recommended the Elector to send the promising youngster to Vienna, and even offered to teach him himself. Fortunately for the world the Elector, who hitherto had done little enough for Beethoven, followed Haydn's advice. An allowance was made to the young musician and he started for Vienna in November 1792. He was then all but twenty-two years of age. He had composed little, and that little unimportant if compared to the enormous amount produced by many other great composers at the same age. Yet it is significant that he had impressed all competent judges who came into contact with him with a sense of his commanding personality. It was felt that he had in him the power to do great things. A resident in Bonn, sending a song of Beethoven's to a friend, wrote, "He does not usually occupy himself

with trifles like this. He is all for the grand and sublime." We can compare him in this to Milton, whose youth was avowedly spent in quietly preparing himself for the mighty destiny that he had planned for himself. In neither case was this calm self-confidence displaced.

Beethoven came to Vienna an accomplished pianist. His extempore playing had already excited the wondering admiration of all who heard it, and it was this talent that first opened to him the salons of Vienna, and made him, in spite of his eccentricities and caprices, the spoiled child of the exclusive Viennese aristocracy. Introductions from Count Waldstein and other friends brought him to the notice of the most cultivated people in Vienna, and had he so inclined he might have spent his life in playing in one palace after another. But his ambition was fixed upon a loftier goal than this. He devoted himself to study with characteristic ardour, and the exercises that he wrote at this time for Haydn and other masters, many of which have fortunately been preserved, show how conscientiously he must have worked. It is not surprising to find that he did not get on well with Haydn. The sturdy independence of his character harmonised but ill with Haydn's complacent opportunism; and Beethoven, dissatisfied with the slow progress he was making, soon transferred himself to other masters. From Albrechtsberger he learnt much, though the stiff old contrapuntist never really understood the point of view of a

pupil to whom the most time-honoured rules were merely crutches to be thrown aside when occasion demanded. As to the Viennese nobility, whose spoiled darling he was to be from this time forth, Beethoven at the same time liked and despised them. "It is good to mix with the aristocracy," he once said, "but one must be able to impress them." No one was less likely to lose his head in exalted society than Beethoven. There are hundreds of anecdotes extant which show the extraordinary freedom that he permitted himself in his relations with his blue-blooded patrons, and it is a proof of the store which the latter set upon Beethoven as a man and an artist that they complacently endured from him behaviour which would promptly have closed their doors to anyone else. When we remember what was the usual attitude of musicians to their patrons in the eighteenth century, that of Haydn to Prince Esterhazy for instance, it is astonishing to find on what intimate and familiar terms Beethoven was with many of his noble pupils. But the times were changing; the air vibrated with the names of liberty, fraternity and equality; the echoes of the French Revolution penetrated even to the drawing-rooms of Vienna, and in the very citadel of etiquette the walls that separated the various classes of society were beginning to crumble. Beethoven's personal fascination must have been very great, and it is unfortunate that most of the stories that have been handed down by contemporaries are concerned

chiefly with examples of his boorishness or ungovernable temper. This, however, is not surprising, and is in fact a close repetition of the case of Handel. A man of this stamp is so far superior to the common mortals among whom he moves, that the true greatness of his mind is often scarcely perceived; it is only the minor and comparatively insignificant traits of his character, his little eccentricities of manner and appearance and his carelessness of ordinary social conventions that impress his purblind contemporaries. I do not propose to retail for the hundredth time any of the numberless anecdotes still current illustrative of Beethoven's passionate temper and of his neglect of the customary graces of civilised society. In his music we can read the true Beethoven, with his sublime imagination, his noble view of life, his resolute endurance of disaster that would have crushed the spirit of an ordinary man. While this is told for us in language plain for all to read, it is idle to let our conception of Beethoven be degraded by the fact that he towered too high among his contemporaries for them to realise the grandeur of his intellectual stature.

Beethoven's life in Vienna offers little subject for comment. Save for brief expeditions to Prague and Berlin, and his habit of spending the summer months in one or other of the villages a few miles from the capital, he never left Vienna, though within its walls he changed his lodgings with bewildering frequency. Beethoven lived in his music, as he himself often

said, and the stirring episodes through which he lived left little impress upon him. His veneration for Napoleon in his early days is well known and his proportionate disgust when the latter assumed the title of Emperor, but as a general rule he troubled himself as little with the progress of events in the outer world as did Sir Thomas Browne, in whose writings occurs no reference to the Civil War, through the terrors of which he lived his quiet country life in undisturbed tranquillity.

Beethoven never had to complain of neglect. From the first his genius was fully recognised, and in his later years he ruled musical Vienna with an authority that was never questioned. His works were always received with respect and often with enthusiasm; and though, as his musical development progressed, certain well-meaning critics would sometimes adjure him to return to the simpler style of his early days, he was never so far in advance of public taste that his works failed to win due appreciation, even the Choral symphony being received, according to contemporary accounts, with a remarkable demonstration of enthusiasm. It is not necessary to do more than allude to Beethoven's numerous love-affairs. He appears to have been of a singularly inflammable nature, and was never long without a divinity who for a time inspired him with sentiments of the most ardent description. His attachment, however, to the Countess Theresa Brunswick was of a more serious de-

scription, and affected his life in the most tragic manner.

In 1794 she was one of his pupils, and her account of one of her lessons is one of the most interesting glimpses of the passionate imperious Beethoven that we have. From that time to 1806 the intimacy between them was of the closest kind, as is proved by some letters of Beethoven addressed to her that have survived. In 1806, with the approval of her brother Franz, who was himself a dear friend of the composer's, the Countess was formally though secretly betrothed to Beethoven. The engagement lasted for four years, and was finally broken off in 1810 by Beethoven, whose state of health made marriage out of the question.

The latter part of Beethoven's life was clouded by the terrible affliction of deafness, which making its first appearance about the year 1798 gained in intensity until it practically isolated him from all society. Its advance seems to have been gradual, and probably intermittent. In 1802 he wrote that he was unable to hear the pipe of a peasant playing a short distance from him, yet in 1805 when "Fidelio" was being rehearsed we find him making the most elaborate criticisms of the playing of the band, and complaining that his nuances of expression were not properly attended to. Up to 1813 he conducted performances of his own works, and in 1814 he played the pianoforte part of his B flat trio in public. In 1820 or 1821, however, he was so deaf that he could not hear

what he was playing; and an English traveller, John Russell, who heard him improvise, noticed that often when he played soft passages he produced no sound: "He only hears with spiritual ears; his eyes and the almost imperceptible movement of his fingers indicate that he is inwardly following his music in all its developments. The instrument is as dumb as its player is deaf." Nevertheless we find him in 1822 still hearing enough to be able to say that a soloist at the opening of the Josefstadt Theatre was not singing in tune, but after 1822 he probably heard nothing and had always to carry paper and a pencil with him for his friends to write what they wished to say to him. In 1824, at the first performance of the Choral symphony, during which he stood in the orchestra, he had to be turned round towards the audience that he might see the applause which he could not hear. What deafness meant to a man of Beethoven's temperament it is easy to understand. He bore it with wonderful firmness, but he was often a prey to profound melancholy, and no doubt it aggravated his natural irritability. Half the stories in circulation of his extraordinary simplicity and absent-mindedness probably arise from his having heard but imperfectly what was said to him, and having been too proud to admit it; and to his deafness and consequent quickness of temper may be ascribed much of his foolish behaviour to servants, tradespeople and the like.

In his earlier years Beethoven seems to have made enough money to satisfy all his wants, but

from 1813 onwards his letters are full of references to pecuniary embarrassment. A constant source both of worry and expense was his worthless nephew Carl, the son of his brother Caspar. Beethoven's loyalty to this ungrateful wretch was sublime. Not only did he pay his bills and pardon his excesses times without number, but he actually contracted the illness which cost him his life by a drive in pouring rain undertaken in the hope of reclaiming the prodigal after a last escapade. His life had been one of ceaseless industry, and he died in harness. On his deathbed, believing himself to have years of life still before him, he confided to a friend some of the projects that were never to be realised—another symphony, a Requiem and music to Goethe's "Faust." The strangely impressive scene of his death has often been described. For hours he had been struggling for life with all the strength of his iron constitution. The evening shadows were gathering when there came a sudden and violent storm of hail and snow. A terrific clap of thunder roused the dying man. He rose in his bed, waved his clenched hand above his head, sank back, and all was over. His funeral testified to the regard in which he was held. The crowd was immense. He was followed to his grave by all the musicians in Vienna, and among the torch-bearers was Franz Schubert, whose songs Beethoven had first read upon his deathbed, saying of their composer, "Truly this man has a spark of the divine fire."

It is deplorably commonplace to speak of Beethoven as a Colossus, but so in truth he is, standing with one foot on the old world of music and one on the new. His early works are essentially of the eighteenth century. Many of them might have been written by Haydn. His latest works are so modern that we have hardly got abreast of them yet. What Beethoven did for music obviously cannot be summed up in two words. His extension of the forms of music, his breaking of the fetters in which his predecessors loved to dance were enormously important, but perhaps more far-reaching still was his introduction of the personal element into music. Before his day men had pictured themselves in their music—no one can write music or anything else without doing so—but they did so unconsciously and we perceive them as in a glass darkly. Beethoven mirrored his soul in music of set purpose. Music was to him just as much a means of expressing his feelings as poetry was to Shelley. Compare for a moment the C minor symphony with Mozart's G minor, and you see the difference. The G minor is an expression of feeling and one of the noblest ever clothed in a musical form, but Mozart is not singing of himself; he is the spokesman of the world at large, while Beethoven speaks for himself alone. Herein lies the chief fascination of Beethoven's music. With no composer are we on such intimate terms as with Beethoven. He lays bare his soul for us; he pours forth his inmost feelings as no composer

before him and very few since have done. Sometimes he has told us in words what he is writing about it, as in the Pastoral symphony, the "Adieux" sonata and the "Canzone di ringraziamento" in the posthumous quartet in A minor, and then even the most stiff-necked critics of the classical school have to admit that he is writing programme music. But in the truest and best sense of the word all Beethoven's music, all at least that was written after he reached maturity, is programme music. All of it is a musical expression of ideas or feelings. As to what these ideas were people will differ. One man will read a symphony or a sonata in one way, and one in another, but read them we must, or if we cannot we call them obscure, as for generations the world did and still does in the case of the posthumous quartets.

Programme music is now a term of abuse in the mouths of many men, partly because of the excesses of modern composers, who in default of ideas of their own have been reduced to tell in music stories intrinsically incapable of musical expression. Thus, when Rimsky-Korsakoff writes a symphonic poem about a big bird—possibly the "monstrous crow" of nursery legend, which struck terror to the heart of Tweedledum and Tweedledee—and a gazelle, and tries to show us in music how the crow killed the gazelle, or the gazelle killed the crow, he is writing music of a bad and impossible kind. Music has nothing to do with crows and gazelles, and a composer only

degrades himself and his art by trying to give them musical expression. But, when Beethoven in his "Eroica" paints for us his ideal hero in all the changing scenes of life, or when in the symphony in A he sings the praises of the dance, from the dance of the spheres when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy to the dance of happy peasants in the riotous joy of life, he is putting music to its noblest use, he is lifting music from being merely an agreeable entertainment, and using it for a noble ethical purpose, as Wordsworth used poetry and Watts used painting.

The enemies of programme music tell us that music should express nothing, that it should exist for itself alone, hovering like a beautiful ineffectual angel in the intense inane. Because music means nothing to them, they insist that it meant nothing to its creators. Doubtless there is much music in the world that never meant and never will mean anything to anybody, just as there is an immense amount of poetry written without any object but that of tickling the ear with the luscious music of words; but it is an insult to a man of Beethoven's genius to suppose that he spent his life in stringing tunes together, and lavishing upon them all the resources of art with no object in view but that of delighting the ears of men with a concourse of sweet sounds. No, the value of Beethoven's music and of all good music is a moral value. Great musicians are great teachers and great educators, and it is only when

we realise this, and can understand the lessons that they teach, that music begins to have that educational value of which we hear so much and know so little.

Beethoven's musical career has been divided by historians into three periods, but this sub-division can only be accepted in a very general sense. His three styles overlap each other in a rather disconcerting way, and it is impossible to draw a hard and fast line between them.

Roughly speaking, his first or Haydnesque period extends to 1800. Some critics would perhaps throw back the second symphony, written in 1802, to this period, but on the other hand a great deal of the music written in 1801, including the "Moonlight" sonata, cannot possibly be classed with his Haydnesque productions. The last period may be said to begin in 1816 with the quartet in F minor, although several works written after this period seem to belong to the second rather than to the third period.

As I have said, it is impossible to make a strictly chronological arrangement of Beethoven's three styles; the important thing is that his genius was always developing; he was never content to rest upon his oars, or to look upon any of his works as a final solution of the problem of musical expression.

Beethoven's method of working was entirely different from that of Mozart. He had nothing of the latter's inspired facility. His method was

painstaking and laborious. His sketch-books, some of which are preserved in the British Museum, show plainly the extraordinary amount of pains he took to elaborate his ideas. It was his habit to carry one of these always with him, and to jot down anything that occurred to him during his walks or meals. Then he would work at these ideas with the most minute care, writing and rewriting until the original idea took the shape that satisfied him. He hardly wrote a bar that was not submitted to this process of revision, while in some cases he would rewrite a passage, such as the great air "Komm' Hoffnung" in "Fidelio" some twenty times. Another interesting fact is proved by these priceless sketch-books, namely that it was his habit to work at three or four things at the same time, consecrating to each and all of them the same loving and conscientious care. A mind that worked in this way was bound to be slow in developing, and as a matter of fact it was not until he reached his thirtieth year that Beethoven really found himself. In his earlier works, among much that he inherited directly from Haydn and Mozart there are passages of thoroughly characteristic originality; his first two symphonies are precious to students of his development, but it is not until we reach the period of the "Eroica" that we find Beethoven in possession of a style of mature individuality.

With that noble work he broke for ever with the traditions of the past, and soared into realms unknown before. The story of its dedication is well

known, but it is too characteristic to be omitted. The work was written as a tribute of admiration to Napoleon; it was finished in the spring of 1804, and the fair copy was inscribed with the words, "Sinfonia grande Napoleon Bonaparte." Beethoven was thinking of sending it to Paris, when the news reached Vienna that Napoleon had assumed the title of Emperor. Beethoven's idol was shattered; his hero, the saviour of France, was an ambitious tyrant. In the passion of his disappointment he tore the title from his symphony and trampled it under foot. Later the symphony was rechristened an "Heroic Symphony to celebrate the memory of a great man."

Already in his pianoforte sonatas we have seen Beethoven striking out on a new path; in fact he said himself of the two sonatas included in Opus 31 that they embodied a change in his style of writing. After the production of the "Eroica" he may be regarded as fully emancipated from the bondage of the eighteenth century.

It is not part of the scheme of the present sketch to attempt anything like a systematic review of all that Beethoven produced, but his life is in the truest sense written in his music, and the best way to arrive at an appreciation of his character is to trace its development in his works. No other composer has put so much of himself into his music, and whether we study his symphonies, his sonatas, or his quartets, we find a record of his hopes and fears, his aspirations, his struggles and

his disappointments, the meaning of which can scarcely be missed by the most superficial inquirer. In the symphonies above all is the man pictured for us in colours of marvellous vividness. Of the "Eroica" I have already spoken. Here Beethoven on his own showing has painted the portrait of a great man. The symphony is not, like Strauss's "Heldenleben," a connected story. Beethoven's respect for symphonic form was too great for him to compel it to subserve whatever programme he had in view. His symphony is a series of scenes and impressions, not necessarily connected but all illustrating one main idea. The opening movement with its heroic ardour, its noble enthusiasm and its magnificent joy in life is followed by the funeral march, to which Beethoven referred when he said on receiving the news of Napoleon's death: "I have already written music for this event." In this noble movement he ushers his hero to his last rest with all the pomp and solemnity of which music is capable. What the scherzo signifies has been often debated. Dr Charles Wood's ingenious theory is that a crowd, full of pent-up excitement, is awaiting the hero, whose appearance is welcomed by a sudden shout, after which in the trio he addresses the people, the addition of the third horn, used here probably for the first time in symphonic music (not actually for the first time in music of any kind as Sir George Grove suggested, since Handel has four horns in "Giulio Cesare,") being intended to give greater force and dignity to the oration. I

should myself have preferred an explanation more general and less precise. The scherzo has always seemed to me a musical expression of the romantic side of the hero's character; there is to me a touch of the visionary, of the mystic about it, which carries as it were a step further the infinite suggestion of the yearning tenderness of the second subject of the first movement. But whatever the scherzo may be, there is no doubt of what Beethoven means by the finale. Here the *ewig weibliche* makes its appearance, and in the union of the masculine and feminine elements, wonderfully typified in the two subjects, he shows us the marriage of two minds, each exalted and ennobled by the other to heights of celestial beauty. Beethoven never surpassed the accents of divine purity in which this union of human souls is sung. We seem to have here a musical realisation of that burning desire which in his own case was never to be fulfilled: "O that at the last I may find her who is destined to be mine, and who shall strengthen me in virtue!"

The fourth and fifth symphonies are far more immediately autobiographical than any of the others, for in them we have the tale of Beethoven's unhappy passion for the Countess Theresa. The fourth is the pæan of joy and triumph sounded over their betrothal; the fifth, the first two movements of which were probably finished before the fourth was begun, is a picture in brief of that stormy and passionate episode in Beethoven's career which wrung his heart and tried his man-

hood more profoundly than any of the troubles that darkened his life. Never did poet sing of his love in strains nobler and more heart-stirring than these, nor could any words carry a message more plainly and movingly than the music in which Beethoven laid bare his soul. If this is programme-music—and who can call it by any other name?—then is programme-music justified for all eternity.

The fourth symphony is the gayest and brightest that Beethoven ever wrote. It is pleasant to think that even that much-enduring soul had its moments of sunshine, and in such a moment was this symphony written. The slow movement is a love-song of profound and tender feeling, but the rest of the work is joyous and frolicsome, even rollicking in its humour. There is hardly a touch of the rough horse-play which characterises the lighter movements in some of his later works, but the symphony—and particularly the finale—suggests irrepressible life and vigour, abundant health and high spirits. Rarely in after life was Beethoven to know this radiant mood of happiness.

Very different is the world into which we are plunged in the C minor symphony. Here all is storm and tempest, and the tide of passion sweeps along with resistless fury. Sir George Grove, in his most sympathetic and illuminating book upon Beethoven and his symphonies, has pointed out how strikingly the first movement is illustrated by a passage in the work entitled "Beethoven's

unsterbliche Geliebte," which is an account of the relations between Beethoven and the Countess Theresa. Few of the contemporary descriptions of the composer that have come down to us give a more life-like impression of his stormy and imperious nature, and I cannot forbear quoting some passages from it. The story, it should be explained, is told by the Countess Theresa herself.

"One stormy winter's day in 1794, while the snow stood deep in the streets of Vienna, Countess Theresa Brunswick, then a girl of fifteen, was waiting for Beethoven to come and give her her pianoforte lesson. Weather never stopped him, but when he appeared it was plain that as fierce a storm was raging in his soul as in the streets. He entered with hardly a movement of his head, and she saw at once that everything was wrong.

"'Practised sonata?' said he, without looking at her. His hair stood more upright than ever, his splendid eyes were half-closed, and his mouth —oh, how wicked it looked! She stammered a reply: 'Yes, I have practised it a great deal, but—' 'Let's see.' She sat down to the piano, and he took his stand behind her. The thought crossed her mind, 'If only I am lucky enough to play well!' But the notes swam before her eyes, and her hands trembled. She began hurriedly. Once or twice he said '*Tempo*,' but it made no difference, and she felt that he was getting more impatient as she became more helpless. At last

she struck a wrong note. She knew it at once, and could have cried. But then the teacher himself struck a wrong note, which hurt his pupil both in body and mind. He struck—not the keys, but her hand, and that angrily and hard; strode like a madman to the door of the room, and from thence to the street-door, through which he went, banging it after him."

Such are the man and woman, and such are the scenes depicted in the fifth symphony. No words of mine can make clearer the contrast between the first and second subjects of the opening movement, the one tremendous in its overbearing passion, the other meek, yearning and tender. Beethoven has here painted himself and his beloved in colours that can never fade. Like the story of their love the music whirls upon its tumultuous course, fierce and terrible, at times almost incoherent for all its strict form, rising and falling in waves of passion, yet with touches of ineffably pathetic tenderness—surely never was the tragedy of a man's love told in accents of such irresistible sincerity and force. But the course of their love, if it did not run smooth, was not all storm and tempest. In the slow movement we have its calmer and more dignified side, when hope blessed the composer with visions of peace and happiness, here set forth in the form of variations upon a noble and beautiful melody such as only he could write. Between the composition of this movement and the next came the rupture

of the engagement, and the final shattering of all Beethoven's dreams. In the scherzo, that embodiment of indescribable mystery and horror, he treads the valley of the shadow of death, relieved only by the grim and cynical humour that peeps out in the trio. But Beethoven was a man of heroic mould; he was not to be crushed by sorrows that would have driven a weaker man to destruction, and after a passage of unutterable weirdness, in which the pulse of life is at its lowest, he bursts forth into a magnificent song of triumph. God is still God and the world is fair, he seems to say. For a moment the shadows of the scherzo gather again, but his manhood triumphs once more, and the symphony ends in the radiant splendour of a glorious day.

I do not think there is anything in music more ennobling or more inspiring than the picture of himself that Beethoven gives us in this symphony. We are told that the spectacle of a good man struggling with adversity is pleasing to the gods. That may very likely be so, but to men the spectacle of a good man triumphing over adversity is more pleasing still. We hear a great deal nowadays of the educational value of music, and a very definite educational value it undoubtedly has. But its educational value depends entirely upon the manner in which we listen to it, and upon what it means to us. Viewed only as a clever and ingenious development of certain themes I do not

think that the C minor symphony will educate anyone to a very serious extent, but viewed as a record of Beethoven's struggle with misery and despair, and of his ultimate victory, I think it will educate any one who is susceptible of education very much more than the average lecture or sermon. It would be impossible for anyone in whom the moral sense was not completely dead to rise from hearing it without feeling that his faith in himself and in mankind was strengthened. I will insult my readers no longer by trying to put into words my own feelings with regard to this stupendous masterpiece, but I will venture to quote the magnificent close of Mr Laurence Binyon's "Death of Adam," in which the same idea is treated in poetry that may well be set by the side of Beethoven's music :—

> "He saw how vast a scope
> Ennobled them of power to dare beyond
> Their mortal frailty in immortal deeds,
> Exceeding their brief days in excellence,
> Not with the easy victory of gods
> Triumphant, but in suffering more divine;
> Since that which drives them to unnumbered woes,
> Their burning deep unquenchable desire,
> Shall be their glory, and shall forge at last
> From fiery pangs their everlasting peace."

Very different is the sixth symphony, the "Pastoral," a lovely picture of the sights and sounds of out-of-door life. Beethoven was a passionate lover of the country. His summers

were always spent in one or other of the villages near Vienna, where he passed whole days in the open air, wandering in the fields or sitting in the fork of a tree, sketch-book in hand. In the Pastoral symphony his worship of nature is transmuted into music, but it is music that is something more than merely picturesque. As he said himself, he dealt with impression rather than with painting. It is the emotion engendered by nature rather than nature herself that he describes, and this reaches its highest point in the glorious song of thankfulness that succeeds the marvellously realistic picture of the storm. Here Beethoven poured forth his spirit in tones that breathe the very ecstasy of adoration. The beauty of the world as it lies sparkling in the sunshine is in his music. He sings for the earth and all that therein is. In Mr George Meredith's words :—

> "The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine
> He is, the hills, the human line,
> The meadows green, the fallows brown,
> The dreams of labour in the town;
> He sings the sap, the quickened veins,
> The wedding song of sun and rains,
> . . . . . .
> The voice of one for millions
> In whom the millions rejoice
> For giving their one spirit voice."

Different as the seventh and eighth symphonies are in scope and general character they are alike in giving us an insight into one feature of

Beethoven's personality, which it is impossible to ignore if we wish to know what the man really was. I have already pointed out that while comparatively few of Beethoven's contemporaries seem to have realised the grandeur of his moral nature and the towering force of his intellect, all of them agree in recording the rougher and more uncouth traits of his character. Hundreds of stories have come down to us illustrating his boorish manners and his fondness for the broadest and most obvious form of joking. Perhaps he inherited a taste for intellectual horseplay from some remote Flemish ancestor, but at any rate it must be admitted that if from one point of view he appears as the Michael Angelo of music, from another he is certainly its Teniers. In the finales of both of these symphonies we find him in the guise of the latter. Here his love of riotous fun bursts forth in uncontrolled vivacity. Here he gives himself up whole-heartedly to a boisterous humour that can be paralleled in the works of no other great composer. His music teems with quaint surprises and whimsical tricks. It is the incarnation of practical joking, very different in character from the rippling merriment of the fourth symphony, and though less engaging it is nevertheless profoundly interesting as a revelation of a curious corner of Beethoven's mind. In other ways the symphonies are utterly different, the seventh being one of the most romantic of Beethoven's inspirations, while the eighth is intimate and personal in character and conceived on

a much smaller scale than its predecessor. Wagner's description of the seventh symphony as an apotheosis of the dance gives the key to its meaning, but we must take the word dance in its widest signification. In the majestic introduction we seem to be ascending a mighty staircase, and when the gates of the palace are flung open the scenes that pass before our eyes seem to embrace all earth and heaven in their scope. In the first movement the rhythm of the universe is set to music, from the ordered beauty of the rolling spheres of heaven to the voices of nature and the wild music that burdens every bough. The allegretto suggests the dim mysterious rites of some ancient religion, with strange processions in the shadow of rock-hewn temples; while in the scherzo we are in the primeval forest with fauns and dryads, and in the finale with boisterous peasants in a rustic merry-making. The eighth symphony, even to Sir George Grove, who disliked programmes, suggested a conscious piece of autobiography. He calls it the picture of a day in the composer's life. Such it may well be. It is a *genre* picture of the Dutch school, curiously in-door in feeling compared with most of Beethoven's works, and elaborated with the most delicate nicety of detail. Beethoven's peculiar affection for this work, which was little understood by his contemporaries, suggests its strongly personal nature, and in it we seem to come closer to Beethoven the man than in almost anything that he has left us.

In the Choral symphony we are in a world far removed from the intimate subjectivity of the symphony in F. Ere that last and greatest of his symphonies was written the clouds had gathered heavily over Beethoven's head. His deafness isolated him entirely from the world of men. He was poor and ill-cared for, neglected if not actually deserted by the friends whom his suspicions had estranged. Bitterest of all was the grief caused by the behaviour of his scoundrelly nephew, who repaid the more than paternal love lavished upon him by his uncle with the blackest ingratitude and deceit. Yet from this abyss of sorrow arose the voice that was to sing for all time the song of human joy.

The Choral symphony is in one sense the easiest and in another the most difficult of Beethoven's works to grasp. By using some stanzas of Schiller's "Ode to Joy" in the finale, he makes plain what is the general aim of the work. It is the quest of the human soul for joy, which in this marvellous and unequalled finale finds its goal. But what the various stages of that quest are, what Beethoven intended by the first three movements of the work, is a question that is not yet satisfactorily settled. It is this doubt, this difficulty that has earned for the Choral symphony, as for certain others of his later works, the title of obscure. So long as the hearer feels that the music to which he listens has a definite meaning, which he fails to grasp, so long will he have that sense of baffled endeavour which will not be dismissed by all the

assurances of programme-writers that he should regard music simply as music, and not to trouble to look behind the mere notes of the work for the secret of the composer's inspiration. Wagner once wrote a programme for the ninth symphony, illustrated by numerous quotations from Goethe, of which the gist is that the first movement expresses the Titanic struggle of the soul, athirst for joy, against the veto of that hostile power which rears itself between us and earthly happiness; the second a feverish flight from old ideals to a new and unknown bliss; the third a memory of purest happiness from early days. In the last movement, in a series of variations on a tune of unsurpassable nobility and beauty, Beethoven gives us his conception of joy in all its manifestations, thus crowning his career as a composer with a sublime picture of the possibilities of human nature.

The personality of Beethoven, as I have endeavoured partially to trace it in his symphonies, is revealed no less clearly in his sonatas and quartets, some would say even more clearly than in his more elaborate orchestral works. In the pianoforte sonatas particularly, we seem to come almost nearer to the composer than in anything that he wrote, and there are certain movements in listening to which one can almost fancy that one is hearing with the ear of faith one of those marvellous improvisations in which the composer poured forth his soul in music, oblivious of all save the passionate emotions that burned within him. To

describe the marvellous series of his chamber works and to record the impressions which they produce would take a volume in itself, and I dare not linger over the too fascinating task. Yet I will venture to say something about one of them—the Kreutzer sonata—not because it is one of the most famous things that Beethoven ever wrote, but because it has been the subject of most unsympathetic and unjust criticism in Tolstoi's celebrated novel, called by its name. If it were necessary to prove that Tolstoi is totally without the power of appreciating music, a reference to his "Kreutzer Sonata" would be quite enough. Surely the fact that he speaks of Beethoven's inspired work as sensual, and as having been written to arouse sensual feelings, brands Tolstoi for ever as a Philistine of the Philistines. No man's music is freer from the taint of sensuality than Beethoven's, and no work of his moves in an atmosphere of more radiant purity than the Kreutzer sonata. If I may venture to propose a reading in mere words of that incomparable masterpiece, I would term it the story of the adventures of a soul. In the first movement I seem to see the soul of man, a new arrived guest moving about in a world not realised. Confronted by the glitter and splendour of life she halts, timid and uncertain. How self-satisfied and complacent is the theme that typifies the marshalled orderliness of modern society. "See my riches, my power," it seems to say; "how compact is my organisation, how firm my foundations; there is no

joint in my armour, I am perfect and complete." But the soul asks timidly, "Is this all? Has life no more to give?" and to all the boasts of the triumphant colossus she still replies, "Is this all?" In the next movement the soul turns to Art—Art in her myriad phases, radiant in beauty, gleaming with the thousand hues of the palette of romance. The soul wanders through scene after scene of ever-changing delight, each one more enchanting than the last. But still satisfaction comes not. In the last movement comes the answer to her often-repeated question. Nature rises before her like a tree springing from the soil, throwing aloft a thousand arms and rushing to the sun. Rapture crowds upon rapture, climax is hurled upon climax. The horizon widens, the air grows purer, till in the end the mighty symbol of growth and strength and purity covers the heavens and fills the earth like that other tree, no less than Beethoven's a type of the victory of truth and right, sung by Tennyson in words of such burning enthusiasm as he but rarely attained :—

> "But this shall grow
> A night of Summer from the heat, a breadth
> Of Autumn, dropping fruits of power; and roll'd
> With music in the growing breeze of Time,
> The tops shall strike from star to star, the fangs
> Shall move the stony bases of the world."

I am far from thinking that this is an adequate exposition of the meaning of the Kreutzer sonata, but I will let it stand, because I believe that it is only by

trying in some such way to fathom the mind of a composer that music like Beethoven's can be properly appreciated. I do not envy the man who sees in the slow movement merely a clever set of variations upon a charming melody, or in the finale merely an ingenious development of a spirited theme, and I believe that to look upon music from this point of view is to degrade it from its place among the arts, and to ignore its God-given mission to man.

Space fails me to linger over the wonderful pageant of Beethoven's quartets, culminating in the series usually known as "posthumous," written for Prince Galitzin — but never paid for. The obscurity of these last quartets is proverbial, as indeed all music worthy of the name must be obscure when the composer tells the world nothing of the emotions that gave it birth. That the posthumous quartets are an expression of personal feeling no one who hears them can doubt, and in one or two instances—as in the "Song of thankfulness for recovery from illness" in the quartet in A minor—Beethoven has given a hint of the source of his inspiration. But for the most part the clue is irretrievably lost which should guide us through the millions of strange shadows that on them tend. I have sometimes wondered, knowing that in the closing years of his life Beethoven often solaced his troubled soul with the idea of writing music to Goethe's "Faust," whether the B flat quartet may not owe its genesis to Goethe's mighty drama. The scherzo has a strangely sardonic and Mephis-

tophelean ring, and the "Danza Tedesca" naturally carries one's thoughts to the gay revels of the Kermesse scene, while no more perfect musical realisation of the passionate purity and virginal self-abandonment of Gretchen could be conceived than the marvellous "Cavatina." Such an attempt to read a meaning into a work of art is perhaps fanciful, but it is certain that Beethoven's posthumous quartets will remain "obscure," so long as they are looked upon merely as abstract music, and that the only way to appreciate them is by looking upon them as the book in which Beethoven wrote the record of his soul, and by trying to decipher the story of that noble heart written in tears and blood.

The soul of Beethoven is mirrored no less clearly in his choral and dramatic works than in those for instruments alone. In all that he wrote, in "Fidelio" and the "Missa Solemnis" as much as in his symphonies and sonatas, we feel the man's heart beating behind his music more unmistakably than in the works of any other composer. In "Fidelio" he has poured forth his worship of the *ewig weibliche* in strains of marvellous purity and tenderness. Leonora is the noblest figure that treads the operatic stage. She is an embodiment of that ideal of which Beethoven dreamed and prayed, but was never to know—the woman, if I may quote again words already quoted, who was at the last to be his, and who should strengthen him in virtue. In the great Mass Beethoven put into music his deepest feelings on religion, which were

all the more profound and sincere because they had soared beyond the world of dogma. In the "Credo" he set the words of the Catholic creed, but there is nothing Catholic in his music. Behind the mere words we seem to see that mighty intellect brooding over the mysteries of life and death, trammelled by no priestly doctrines or worn-out formulas. The tremendous accents of the "Credo," in their veiled and mysterious majesty, recall very strikingly that curious confession of faith, if so it can be called, which Beethoven copied out himself and kept constantly before him:

> "I am that which is.
> I am all that is, that was, and that shall be.
> No mortal man hath lifted my veil.
> He is alone by Himself, and to Him alone do all things owe their being."

Beethoven's faith was one that, as the poet sings, "had centre everywhere, nor cared to fix itself to form." In the "Sanctus" no less than in the "Credo," we feel the grandeur of the religious instinct that is here clothed in music. There is very little Christian feeling in that awful vision of Deity. It recalls rather some vast image of Buddha, tremendous in its eternal tranquillity, lifting its marble forehead far above the clouds of warring sects and systems. The Mass is throughout, like all Beethoven's music, curiously personal in tone. It is no world-hymn of prayer and praise, like Bach's Mass in B minor. It is the voice of one man, the record

of a personality, moulded in undying bronze. It is not the greater music for that, but as a human document it stands alone among the many famous settings of the Roman service. This in fact sums up Beethoven's musical legacy to the world. He made music definitely a vehicle of personal emotion —not that the great men who had gone before him had not written themselves, their thoughts, feelings and aspirations, large upon their works. They had done so, but as it were unconsciously. With Beethoven music took its stand, as a means of personal expression, by the side of painting and poetry. It is scarely too much to say of him, so considered, that he found music a science and left it an art.

WEBER

CHAPTER X

WEBER

SO long as Beethoven lived his musical supremacy was unchallenged, but he was far from being the only star in the musical firmament of that time. Of the others the brightest was Weber, who was born sixteen years after Beethoven (1786), and died one year before him (1826). Weber and Beethoven met but once in the flesh, when the former came to Vienna to supervise the production of "Euryanthe" in 1823; but each of them knew the other's music well and had subjected it to some severe criticism. Weber in his young days had no sympathy for Beethoven's innovations in symphonic form. He wrote a bitter lampoon after the production of the fourth symphony, in which the various instruments of the orchestra complain of the treatment to which this revolutionary composer has subjected them, until the orchestra-librarian explains to them that the fashion for clearness and force, spirit and fancy has passed away with Mozart, and threatens them with the "Eroica" symphony if they do not stop talking. A few years later, after hearing the symphony in A, Weber pronounced Beethoven to be ripe for the madhouse! Beethoven, on his side, had spoken of Weber's compositions with the

utmost contempt, but in time each had found reason to change his mind. Weber habitually played Beethoven's sonatas at his concerts, and his pupil Benedict recorded the wonderful sympathy with which he entered into their spirit, "which would have given the mighty Ludwig the best proof of Weber's reverence and admiration for his genius." Again, when Weber was producing "Fidelio" at Dresden in 1823, he had a long correspondence with Beethoven about it, in which he expressed a very high opinion of its beauty and dramatic power. Beethoven, in his turn, was completely won by "Der Freischütz," which he had read—he was too deaf to hear it—and so when the two composers actually met their interview was most harmonious. They discussed librettos and the difficulty of finding good ones, and parted with great cordiality. The occasion must have been an interesting one, but probably it was as well that the two composers were not thrown more often together, for they can have had but little in common: the polished, elegant Weber, the favourite of courts and the pet of princesses; and Beethoven—rough, unkempt, deaf, and dirty, with his bluff honesty and unconquerable habit of speaking his mind. Still, the meetings of the great deserve to be recorded, even if, as in this case, the two men were but as ships that pass in the night, and hail each other in passing.

Weber's career, as pictured in his music, is the story of the gradual development of a beautiful and even noble character in the teeth of untoward cir-

cumstances. That he was a man of the strength and individuality of Beethoven cannot be maintained for a moment. He was too easily influenced by his surroundings, and the better part of his genius was of slow growth, so that the history of his earlier days is at best unsatisfactory. He had everything to contend against that was likely to injure a character of singular gentleness and pliability. Alone of the great composers he had the misfortune of aristocratic birth, a misfortune not accompanied in his case by affluence or even moderate wealth, though he never knew the actual penury that was the lot of Haydn. His father was a *mauvais sujet* of the deepest dye. In his younger days Franz Anton von Weber, who was the uncle of Mozart's wife Constanze, served in the army of the Elector Palatine. After this he held a civil post, from which he was dismissed with a pension. He had always been a good violin-player—good, that is, for an aristocratic dilettante—and when he was about forty years of age he drifted into the musical profession, beginning as a viola-player and afterwards becoming an operatic manager, first in one town and then in another. His first wife died young, and he married again in 1785, being then more than fifty years old. Carl Maria was born in December 1786, at Eutin, in Oldenburg, where his father was then director of the town band. Finding that the boy had a taste for music, Weber the father tried to make a musical prodigy of him, hoping no doubt to reap a golden harvest as the father of a

second Mozart. The little Weber's musical education, therefore, began almost as soon as he could speak, and he was subjected to a system of forcing which rendered his childhood miserable and produced none but the most disappointing results. Travelling as he did with his father from town to town, he studied with various teachers, among whom was Michael Haydn, the luminary who in 1798 irradiated the musical world of Salzburg. A few of Weber's early compositions have survived, but the greater part he was wise enough himself to destroy. The roving life which he shared with his father was a bad training for a boy, but his early acquaintance with the *coulisses* of provincial opera-houses, however prejudicial to his character, probably gave him a practical knowledge of the stage which he afterwards turned to good account. Weber's interminable travels, his experiments in lithography, and his attempts at authorship, may be lightly passed over. In 1803 he was in Vienna, where he came under the influence of Vogler, who, whatever his private failings may have been, undoubtedly did Weber good service by recommending him to study the works of the great composers, and by pointing out the musical value of the Volkslieder, which were afterwards to exercise so all-important an influence upon Weber's operatic style. In Vienna Weber was much with Joseph Haydn, whose notorious lack of sympathy with Beethoven probably helped to prejudice Weber against his great contemporary. Through Vogler's influence Weber

received his first appointment—that of conductor at the theatre in Breslau—which he undertook in 1804, when he was not eighteen years of age. He remained at Breslau for two years. His position was probably a difficult one, since he was called upon to exercise authority over men far older than himself; but his behaviour to his subordinates appears to have left a good deal to be desired, and his resignation was due to a quarrel with the deputy-conductor, a man of twice his age, in which the sympathies of the public were unquestionably not with Weber. Breslau taught Weber much, principally the art of conducting, in which he afterwards excelled. His leisure seems to have been devoted less to composition than to practising extempore pianoforte playing, in which he became proficient. After leaving Breslau, Weber, who had to support his father as well as himself, earned his living by concert tours, and for a few months he was Musik-Intendant to Duke Eugene of Wurtemberg at Schloss Carlsruhe, in Silesia, an appointment which induced him to write a good deal of instrumental music, including two symphonies, now happily buried in oblivion. In 1807 the Duke disbanded his orchestra, but he contrived to procure for Weber the post of private secretary to his brother, Duke Ludwig, who was one of the leading lights of the court of his brother, the King of Wurtemberg. Stuttgart was as bad a nursing-ground for genius as could be imagined. The court was one of the most dissipated in Europe, and Weber's

appointment launched him into the midst of its folly and depravity. Music seems to have lost her hold upon him, and he accepted complacently the conditions in which he found himself. It is not pleasant to linger over this period of Weber's career. His patron the Duke was always in financial difficulties, and in consequence was generally on bad terms with the King, whose displeasure was visited upon the luckless secretary. In 1810 the discovery of some deplorable piece of bribery, in which we may hope that Weber was more sinned against than sinning, brought Weber's court career to an abrupt conclusion. He was imprisoned, tried and, with his father, sentenced to perpetual banishment from Wurtemberg.

Courts and princes had done their best to ruin Weber, but to his lasting credit he came unhurt from the ordeal. After his Stuttgart experiences he began a new life. He was no longer a parasite, dancing attendance in the ante-chambers of royalty, but a musician, enthusiastic for his art and eager to perfect himself in all that could assist the development of his genius. He himself realised what an escape he had had. In his diary at the close of 1810 he wrote: "God has sent me many sorrows and disappointments, but He has also thrown me with good people, who have made life worth living. I can honestly say that within the last ten months I have become a better man."

For some years he was a wanderer, giving concerts in Mannheim, Darmstadt, Dresden and

many other German cities. At this time he was far better known as a pianist than as a composer, and men like Spohr did not hesitate to dismiss his symphonies and concertos as amateurish. But he was to find his true medium of expression in opera, and "Silvana" (an adaptation of a boyish work called "Das Waldmädchen"), which was produced at Frankfort in 1810, and "Abu Hassan" (1811) showed discerning critics that a new voice in German music was seeking to make itself heard. His interest in opera was heightened by his appointment in 1813 to the post of chief conductor at the Prague Theatre. Here he had little enough leisure for composition, but the business of staging and directing the performance of other men's works gave him an insight into the secrets of operatic success which he turned to valuable account. However, what first gave him the ear of Germany had nothing to do with the stage. In 1814 a wave of intense patriotic feeling swept over the Fatherland. The struggle with Napoleon, culminating in the victory of Leipzig and the triumphant advance of the Allies to Paris, had knit the German race into close union and kindled all her poets to song. Theodor Körner was the chief minstrel of the movement. The thrilling songs in which he gave poetical expression to the general feeling were in every hand and on every tongue. The echoes of patriotic rapture hardly reached the walls of Prague, but a visit to Berlin brought Weber into the thick of the excitement. Körner's "Leyer und Schwert"

fell into his hands, and before many days were passed he had set some songs from it to music, which ran like wildfire through Germany. Everywhere they aroused frenzied enthusiasm, and Weber soon found himself the accredited bard of German patriotism. A warlike cantata, "Kampf und Sieg," written to celebrate Waterloo, gave him fresh laurels, though this has gone the way of the vast majority of *pièces d'occasion*. Weber was now famous and he found Prague too narrow a field for his energies. He resigned his post in 1816, and in the same year was appointed conductor of the German opera at Dresden. During the remaining years of his life Dresden was his home, and here he produced the works which carried his name beyond the frontiers of Germany, and by right of which he now ranks among the great composers of the world.

At Dresden Weber had much to contend with, not only the rivalry of the Italian opera and its conductor Morlacchi, but the firm belief of the public that German opera could not be worth listening to. However, the Weber of these days was a very different man from the enervated young sycophant of the court at Stuttgart, and he set about his task with a manly and business-like straightforwardness that in itself was half the battle. The position of German opera at that time was curiously similar to that of English opera at the present day, and those who at this moment are struggling to place the latter upon a footing worthy of the greatest nation in the world may read with in-

terest and profit the address to the amateurs of Dresden which Weber published in one of the most widely-read newspapers. After setting forth the aims he had in view, he continued: "The Italians and French have made respectively for themselves a distinct class of opera, in a form that gives the genius of each nation free play. The Germans, however, strenuous in the pursuit of knowledge, and ever ardent in progress, try to appropriate for themselves whatever they admire in others. But for them art is a more serious matter than for their neighbours. With the world at large the principal object is to gratify the senses; the Germans require a work of art to be a harmonious whole, with each part complete in itself, and for them a fine *ensemble* is an absolute necessity." In his struggle for German opera Weber's literary training served him well, and his plan of publishing a sort of analytical programme of a new work a day or two before its production did much to guide public opinion in the right direction. This was only one of a hundred devices by which he ensured the victory of the cause he had at heart. Never did musician work harder for national art, and in the end his triumph was complete. Had Weber never written "Der Freischütz" he would still have done more than any man of his time to establish German opera upon an abiding basis. But it was in "Der Freischütz" that his fight for the recognition of home-grown opera found its crowning triumph, and it

was thoroughly fitting that his work should be produced upon the anniversary of Waterloo. "Der Freischütz" was by no means an inspiration of the moment. So long ago as 1810 he had read the story on which it is founded in Apel's "Gespenstergeschichten," and had dreamt of setting it to music. In 1817 he met Friedrich Kind, and between them they made a sketch of the libretto. Kind wrote it in a week, but Weber's music was not finished until the spring of 1820. It was produced, not at Dresden but at Berlin, where he had a warm friend and admirer in Count Brühl the Intendant, on June 18, 1821. Spontini, who was then all-powerful at Berlin, where his "Olympie" had been produced five weeks before, did all that a jealous Italian could do to hinder the success of a rival. Party feeling ran high between the Italian and German factions, and it was felt that the contest was not between Spontini and Weber, but between Italian and German art. "Der Freischütz" was the manifesto of the latter, and on its reception the future of German opera seemed to hang. Weber was the only one of his party who was not nervous as to the result. He employed the moments he could spare from the toil of rehearsal in writing his "Concertstück," the best and most famous of his purely instrumental works, which he finished a few hours before "Der Freischütz" was produced. His serenity was justified. "Der Freischütz" was one of the greatest, most immediate and most lasting triumphs that

the history of music has to record. It was received with tumultuous applause from beginning to end. Spontini was extinguished and the future of German opera was assured. "Der Freischütz" ran like wild-fire through Germany. In Vienna and Dresden its success surpassed even that of Berlin. Within a few years it was performed in Paris, and in London it became so popular that in 1824 it was being played simultaneously at three theatres.

The success of "Der Freischütz" brought Weber an offer to compose an opera for Vienna, the result of which was "Euryanthe," produced in 1823. "Euryanthe" never approached the success of "Der Freischütz." The libretto, though its defects have been absurdly exaggerated, is stilted and conventional. It contains some effective situations, but it is not well constructed, and the personages of the drama are sadly lacking in life and character. Weber's music is conceived in a loftier vein than that of "Der Freischütz," but it has not the national and popular character which has endeared the earlier work to German hearts. Weber's last work, "Oberon," was written to an English libretto in response to a commission from Kemble, the lessee of Covent Garden Theatre. One of the conditions was that Weber should come to England to produce it in person. His health had been failing for some years, and he was assured by his doctor that the acceptance of this engagement would be his deathblow. He knew that in any case he had not long to live, and his chief desire was to place his family beyond the

reach of poverty. Kemble's offer was tempting, and he closed with it. "Oberon" was written in 1825, and produced in London on April 12, 1826. Its success was great at first, but as in the case of "Euryanthe" its disconnected and fantastic libretto was against it, and it is now rarely performed even in Germany, while in the land that gave it birth it has not been heard for many years. Weber conducted the first twelve performances, and by the end of May it had been performed twenty-eight times. But the composer was a doomed man. He appeared for the last time in public on May 30, and he died on June 4. He was buried at Moorfields chapel, and eighteen years later his coffin was removed to Dresden on the initiative of Wagner, who was then conductor at the opera.

It is to be feared that Weber and his works are travelling fast in the direction of that honourable oblivion in which so many of the builders of modern music are shrouded. Even now he is greater by reason of his influence on the men who followed him than in his own actual achievement. A great name in musical history he must always be. His influence has been too far-reaching for him ever to miss the respectful homage of the student, but on the changing fashion of musical taste his hold is already but slight. How does his music stand in this country? His operas have not been given publicly within the memory of the present generation; his piano music —how rarely is it played at concerts! Perhaps an occasional Rondo or the "Aufforderung zum Tanze,"

but very seldom a sonata or even the once popular "Concertstück." Practically he is now known to English concert-rooms only by two or three of his overtures, which indeed it is difficult to believe will ever be laid upon the shelf. In Germany the strong national colour of "Der Freischütz" endears it to the popular heart, and the taste for male-voice choral singing preserves some of Weber's part-songs. But these exceptions apart, Weber's position in his native land is very much the same as it is with us. It was inevitable that this should be so. For all the great work he did, for all his influence upon subsequent composers, Weber's music has not the qualities that make for immortality. Imagination, picturesqueness, charm—these he has, but not that force, moral, emotional and intellectual, which animates the music of his great contemporary Beethoven, and through it speaks as plainly to us as it did to our forefathers, perhaps more plainly to us than it ever did to them.

What Weber has to say he says delightfully; it is his misfortune that what he has to say is for an age but not for all time. While Beethoven writes in music the emotions that are the common lot of man, Weber represents a passing phase, an attitude of mind sincere enough in itself but of necessity evanescent. That phase passes, another arises, and the poet speaks to deaf ears. Weber is primarily the musician of the romantic movement. He represents in music what his German contemporaries Tieck, Hölty and their clique represent in

poetry. It is not to be thought that romance had not touched music before, indeed music is in itself so essentially romantic that it seems absurd to tie the phrase down to a special period of musical history. The romantic movement, however, aimed definitely at certain things that were already the common property of art and literature, but had only appeared in music as it were by accident. It was a revolt against the tyranny of man and his emotions. It demanded a larger stage and an ampler air. Human passions were not to be the only subject for artistic treatment. Heaven and hell, nature and her mighty forces, the forests with their fauns and dryads, the ocean with its Nereids and Tritons, the demons of earth and air, all these were pressed into the service of art. The magical glory of landscape, the wonders of the setting sun, the horror of tempests, the glory of the dawn—all these the romantic movement taught men to regard not as merely the accessories of a scene in which man was the predominant figure, but as subjects intrinsically worthy of artistic treatment.

Of the musical side of this movement Weber is the leading figure. His genius found its truest expression not in abstract music, though even here his work was valuable in the enlargement of the boundaries of classical form, but in opera. His early operas are comparatively unimportant; it was in "Der Freischütz" that his genius burst into full flower. The subject, carefully chosen by himself, lent itself well to romantic treatment. The mighty

forest in the recesses of which the action passes is as it were the protagonist of the drama. Its solemn shadows lie over every page of the work. The opening notes of the overture breathe forth its mysterious charm. The voice of nature had never sounded like this in music before. In the Pastoral symphony we have rather the emotion of man in contemplating nature. Weber gives us nature independent of any human interest.

More typical still of the romantic movement is Weber's handling of the supernatural element of the story. Demons and spirits were common enough in opera before his day, but their picturesque possibilities had scarcely been realised. Weber's incantation in the Wolf's Glen was something absolutely new to music; the conception of the scene is a proof of his imaginative audacity; its execution immortalises his genius. There is another element in "Der Freischütz" that is scarcely less important than its opening of the treasure-house of romance, and that is its national flavour. Weber has been called the founder of national opera by reason of the designedly German colour of much of the music of "Der Freischütz." So in a sense he is, but he is almost more important as the inventor of the use of local colour in music. Before his day opera had been a very cosmopolitan entertainment. Wherever the scene was laid the characters expressed themselves in much the same terms, and composers cared but little to give a distinctive flavour to their different works. Mozart cared so little about local colour

that though the action of "Don Giovanni" passes at Seville there is not a suspicion of Spanish colouring in the score, and the Don actually accompanies his serenade upon so characteristically Italian an instrument as the mandoline, instead of the national instrument of Spain the guitar. In "Le Nozze di Figaro" it is true that there is a fandango, but there Mozart's experiments in nationalising his music seem to have ended. Weber was the first composer to give realism to the scenes he was illustrating by infusing local colour into his music. By so doing he has influenced the later developments of music perhaps even more profoundly than by his more definitely romantic tendencies, though of course the use of local colour in music is only an offshoot, though a very important one, of the main romantic movement. As a typically German composer Weber had a predecessor in Mozart, whose "Entführung aus dem Serail" and "Zauberflöte" were indebted but little to Italian traditions, to say nothing of minor men like Hiller and Dittersdorf, but Weber's special strength lies in the use he made of the songs and dances of the peasantry. It was the Abbé Vogler who first recommended Weber to study these. How deeply he had drunk at the fount of national music "Der Freischütz" plainly shows. Here his music breathes the very essence of national feeling. The spirit of the German race seems to be woven into the texture of the score. Before his day many composers had recognised the charm of national music. Haydn's

melodies often recall the songs that he heard in his youth; Mozart and Beethoven often wrote "Deutsche" and "contre-danses" of peculiarly national colouring, but it was Weber who first used the music of the people as an essential part of a work of art, and in this sense he is the source from which has sprung the use of local colouring which has influenced modern music so profoundly, to say nothing of the important results which the study and employment of national tunes have had upon composers like Grieg, Brahms, and Stanford.

In Weber's other works for the stage his romantic tendencies are no less plainly exhibited. The incidental music which he wrote in 1821 for "Preciosa" is a wonderful musical picture of Spanish gipsy life, while his overture to Schiller's "Turandot" is a curious attempt to convey a suggestion of Chinese colouring. "Euryanthe" and "Oberon," Weber's two last operas, both suffer from poor librettos, which have prevented them from retaining the place in popular affection to which their noble music entitles them. In "Euryanthe" he worked on a wider canvas than in "Der Freischütz." "Euryanthe" has none of the popular element which counted for so much in the earlier opera. It is a tale of court and chivalry, of passion and intrigue, full of pomp and splendour, and painted with wide sweeps of the brush. Weber's music is perhaps the finest thing he ever did. It has less freshness and charm than "Der Freischütz," but it is far loftier and more

ambitious in style, and there is hardly a touch of weakness in it from beginning to end. The influence of "Euryanthe" on later composers has been scarcely less far-reaching than that of "Der Freischütz." Wagner in his early days drew much on Weber; the idea of the "Tannhäuser" finale, with its contrast between one woman's voice and a chorus of men, was probably suggested by "Euryanthe," and the scene between Ortrud and Telramund in "Lohengrin" owes much to the music of Eglantine and Lysiart.

"Oberon" should have a special interest for Englishmen, as it first saw the light in a London theatre. Unfortunately it has not now been played in this country for many years. Planché cast his libretto into the form which was then popular in England, and it is rather a play with incidental music than a real opera. This is now much against its popularity, but it has recently been revived in Germany with a revised libretto, and perhaps in this form it may win more permanent success. It certainly is not Weber's fault that it has dropped out of the repertory. His music, though written when the hand of death was upon him, shows no failure in power. The fairy scenes in particular are exquisitely delicate and charming. Weber practically invented fairies in music, and no one—not even Mendelssohn, who copied him most faithfully—has ever treated them so sympathetically. The oriental scenes are admirable also. They must have appealed specially to Weber, who loved to

introduce exotic colouring into his music, and here used several Arabian and Turkish melodies with capital effect. But "Oberon" is throughout a bewildering succession of lovely scenes, sometimes not very closely connected, but always entrancing in themselves. It shows the range of Weber's genius perhaps more than any other of his works, and particularly his marvellous power of transmuting into music the sights and sounds of Nature.

I have left myself but little space in which to speak of Weber's other works. His writings for the pianoforte are valuable historically for their enlargement of the boundaries of form and for the importance they assign to technique, though in the latter respect they but faintly foreshadow the astounding developments of modern times. The "Concertstück" marks an interesting stage in the history of programme music. It differs no less widely in form from all earlier concertos than in its illustration of a definite programme, confided by the composer to his pupil Benedict, without which it would be incomprehensible. It is thus something quite distinct from mood-pictures, such as Beethoven's orchestral works often are, in which the "programme" is, as a rule, entirely subservient to the musical form. Weber's independent works for orchestra—his two symphonies and numerous concertos for various instruments—are not permanently valuable, but in the development of the science of orchestration his work can hardly be over-rated. His extraordinary feeling for orchestral colour was

closely allied to the general romantic tendency of his genius. Not merely did he grasp the innate possibilities of each instrument and its special power of suggestion, but he used certain instruments and groups of instruments throughout his operas to indicate certain phases of feeling in a way with which we are now familiar in the works of Wagner, but which then was something absolutely new to music. How large a part his mastery of orchestration played in his wonderful pictures of nature it is scarcely necessary to point out. With Weber the colouring was as integral a part of the picture as the design itself. It is possible that opinion may be divided upon the intrinsic value of his works, but it is unquestionable that he left opera something entirely different—in aim as much as in form—from what he found it.

SCHUBERT

CHAPTER XI

SCHUBERT

OF the marvellous company of men who in different spheres, yet moved by the same spirit, combined to make the early years of the nineteenth century a landmark in the history of the world's work and thought, two have always seemed to me specially allied in the scope of their genius no less strikingly than in their respective fates. Neither of them knew of the other's existence, nor, had they met, could they have interchanged a word, yet in the brotherhood of the spirit they stand side by side. One lies in Rome and the other in Vienna, but the modest words that describe the grave of Schubert as entombing a rich treasure but much fairer hopes, might as justly adorn the tablet that marks the grave of Keats. It is not merely that each lived unhonoured by the many, to find in death a fame that his most sanguine hopes could scarcely have predicted, nor that each was cut off before his transcendent gifts had reached their full development, nor even that each in his later years evinced a remarkable power of self-criticism which promised richly for his future production. It is rather in what we may call their attitude of mind that Keats and Schubert present so striking a resemblance.

The worship of beauty for its own sake, with which we are accustomed to credit the Greeks and the Italians of the Renaissance rather than the men of our own day, was the moving spirit of their being. Neither of them posed as a teacher or a thinker. They poured forth their adoration in strains of unpremeditated art, careless of circumstance, waiting for no recognition, singing as the birds of heaven sing because the flood of song within them is too mighty to be checked. Figures such as those of Keats and Schubert stand, as it were, apart from the whirl of general life, apart from the throng of ordinary men. Keats haunted by visions of Endymion in the dissecting-room at Guy's Hospital, Schubert writing his immortal songs in frowzy tavern parlours, have more in common with the inspired bards of old times than with the thought-ridden, theory-haunted singers of our more sophisticated age. What do they know of doubts and convictions? They are troubled by no obstinate questionings. Howsoever life may buffet them, they dwell in a world of their own, a world of sunlight and bright air. The spirit of youth lives in their music; they seem exempt from the touch of doom.

Franz Peter Schubert was born in Vienna on the 31st of January 1797. His father was a parish schoolmaster, who married twice and had a large family, the mere clothing and feeding of which must have tried his narrow resources severely. Franz's musical instincts revealed themselves very early, and he received such instruction at home as

his father and brothers could give him, supplemented by the ministrations of the parish organist. He very soon outpaced his teachers, whose science was not very profound, and in 1808 he entered the *Convict-Schule*, an establishment for educating the choristers of the Court-chapel. Here he had ample opportunity for making practical acquaintance with music, for there was an orchestra composed of the most promising scholars, which played Haydn, Mozart and the earlier works of Beethoven. Here too he found generous comrades to supply him with music paper, the lack of which had hitherto prevented him from giving expression to the flood of music that welled up from the innermost founts of his being.

But the *Convict-Schule* did not do its duty by the marvellous boy whom fate had entrusted to its guidance. The musical instruction given in the school was of the most paltry kind, and the precious years that might have given Schubert a knowledge of the science of musical composition which would have placed him by the side of Mozart and Beethoven were passed in pouring forth a long series of compositions of all kinds which, though they testify to his extraordinary technical facility and to his wealth of musical ideas, show no less plainly the slightness of his acquaintance with the theory of counterpoint and his uncertain grasp of the principles of musical form. It was Schubert's misfortune to fall into the hands of teachers who preferred to declare that their pupil had learnt direct

from heaven to grounding him in the grammar of his art.

After leaving the *Convict-Schule* Schubert taught the lowest class in his father's school for three years. The work was terrible drudgery, but he had plenty of spare time for music, as is proved by the vast number of compositions that he produced during this period. He ranged over a wide field, and among the works dating from this time are a mass, which was first performed in 1814, a "Stabat Mater" and many other specimens of church music, several operas, numerous symphonies, quartets and piano pieces and songs almost innumerable. Never in the history of music has there been a composer whose fertility equalled that of Schubert. He had but to read a song through and straightway he snatched up a pen and set it to music. Unfortunately he was very far from particular as to the words he set. All was fish that came to his net. Schumann said of him that he could have set an advertisement to music, and much of what he adorned with music had little more poetical value than the agony column of the *Times*, the intellectual tone of which many of the poems he selected faithfully reproduce. There are many stories illustrating the amazing flow of his fancy, such as that relating to the well-known serenade "Hark, Hark the Lark," which was written in a tavern garden on a few lines hastily ruled by a friend on the back of the bill of fare. The famous "Erl-King" was written in a similar frenzy of imagina-

tion, as is recorded by a school-fellow of Schubert's, who found him one afternoon after he had read Goethe's ballad for the first time "whirling out" (*hinzuwühlend*) the music in the very rage of inspiration. No bathos in the words he set seems to have been able to check the flow of his ideas, and unluckily he was but too much inclined to wed his music to verses totally unworthy of it. Particularly was this the case in his attempts at operas. Few of these, weighed down as they are by idiotic librettos, have found their way to the footlights; nor have any of them, in spite of rare beauties in the music, succeeded in winning anything like permanent favour. In his instrumental works he was naturally less handicapped, but here the very fertility of his imagination led him astray. He had not had the necessary training that should have given him a full command of his resources, and he errs by the lack of that conciseness and of that grasp of ordered development which a sterner and more practical schooling would have taught him.

After three years of slavery in his father's school, Schubert gave up his humble employment and threw himself upon the world, determined for the future to devote himself to music alone. He had faithful friends who worshipped his genius and loved him for himself, and were proud to share their fortunes with him. In 1816 he left his father's house, and established himself in lodgings with Schober, a young man then studying at the Vienna University. From that time forth Schubert lived

a queer Bohemian existence, sometimes lodging with one friend and sometimes with another, a life of hard work mingled with harmless gaiety and amusement, which has been harshly spoken of by some of his biographers, though with very little reason. As Sir George Grove very justly pointed out, it would have been a physical impossibility for a man of dissipated habits to produce the amount of work which is credited to Schubert, and there is nothing in the records of Schubert's life to show that he had any faults save an unconventional disregard for appearances and a strong appreciation of good company. One of the most important and interesting friendships of his life was with Vogl, a famous actor and singer, whose devotion to Schubert's music laid the foundation of the latter's subsequent popularity. Schubert first met Vogl about the year 1816, during his sojourn with Schober. Vogl, who was a good musician, was struck with Schubert's extraordinary talent. He became a firm admirer of his music and was the first professional interpreter of his songs, which he had many opportunities of introducing to the notice of influential people, though it does not appear that any of them were sung at concerts until at least three years later. Vogl soon found that he liked the composer quite as much as his music, and their acquaintance ripened into a close friendship. For many years they were almost inseparable, and their walking-tours together in Styria and Upper Austria were among the pleasantest incidents of Schubert's

life. Schubert's character did not fit him for regular employment. He was essentially unmethodical, with a sublime disregard for times and seasons and very little capacity for ordering his life to suit the prejudices of other people. He made various attempts to secure a permanent appointment, but they all came to nothing. By this we are probably the gainers, for he was a man who had to work in his own way, and to be tied down by rules and ordinances would undoubtedly have checked the free expansion of his genius. In the summer of 1818, however, he did accept an invitation to go to Zelész in Hungary, the seat of Count Johann Esterhazy, to teach music to his two little girls. Here he passed several months with satisfaction to himself, but he was evidently somewhat ill at ease with his noble employers, and his letters show unmistakably that he felt a good deal less at home in the drawing-room than in the kitchen, where he found the cook a very pleasant fellow, though the butler was his rival in the affections of a pretty housemaid. The Count and his family were by way of being musical in an aristocratic way, but Schubert did not rate their taste very high. "There is no one here who cares for true art," he wrote to Schober, "unless it is the Countess now and then." However the healthy country life suited him, and he "composed like a god," as he said. Also he enjoyed the Hungarian melodies which he heard the peasants singing in the fields at their work,

and which influenced his music at this time and afterwards more perhaps than he realised himself. Schubert's letters from Zelész show that in spite of rural delights he was always pining for Vienna, and his delight at returning and at joining the circle of his friends once more can well be imagined. It is not known whether his duties as music master to the young Countesses continued after the family moved to Vienna, but in any case his gay artist's life was resumed with renewed appreciation. At this time he shared lodgings with the poet Mayrhofer, many of whose poems he set to music. Vogl was another member of Schubert's most intimate circle of friends, and the following year (1819) the composer made with him one of these summer excursions to the mountains which form the only memorable points in the monotonously tranquil story of his life. In these expeditions, which were repeated almost every year, Schubert was seen at his best, and many delightful stories of his good humour and high spirits have been preserved. Vogl had many friends, and the tours were of the nature of triumphal musical progresses. The singer and composer travelled from house to house, making unforgettable music wherever they went. They were welcome everywhere as much for their amiability and love of fun as for their wonderful music. So between the free and easy life of Vienna and the charming hospitality of his country friends Schubert's days passed pleasantly enough. He was poor, no doubt, but his wants

were comparatively few, and he rarely seems to have been in really straitened circumstances. In fact as time went on and his compositions began to sell, he seems to have been quite the millionaire of his little circle, and it is probable that his needier friends presumed a good deal upon his inexhaustible generosity and good nature. It would serve no good purpose to trace the course of Schubert's life year by year. It was singularly uneventful, in fact save for his annual trips to the mountains the placid tenour of his life was scarcely varied by anything that can be called an incident. In 1821 the first of his songs which attained the dignity of engraving—the famous "Erl-King"—was published, and from that time forth his fame grew steadily if slowly. How slow indeed was its growth can be gathered from the fact that although Schubert had certainly been introduced to Beethoven, had visited him in his rooms and had dedicated to him a set of variations, Beethoven appears to have known nothing of Schubert's songs until a few weeks before his death in 1827. Schubert's shyness was against him. It is said that when he was taken to see Beethoven he was too much overcome to utter a word—or rather write one, for Beethoven was then stone-deaf—and rushed from the room in a frenzy of bashfulness. Certainly he was altogether lacking in that quality of "push," without which even the greatest artists are liable to be overlooked in the struggle for contemporary fame. Such efforts as

he made to win the ear of the public were singularly unsuccessful. His operas were almost uniformly refused by the theatrical managers; in fact although he wrote in all nearly twenty, some of them long works in many acts, like "Alfonso und Estrella" and "Fierrabras," he never can have heard any of them performed except the trifling musical farce "Die Zwillingsbrüder." These repeated disappointments he felt keenly; in fact after the refusal of "Fierrabras," on the production of which in 1824 he had counted with some reason, he described himself in a letter to a friend as "the most miserable being on earth." Still his sunny nature soon reasserted itself, and he forgot his trouble in the excitement of renewed effort. In 1824 he was "enticed," to use his own word, into going to Zelész a second time. His pupils, the young Countesses Esterhazy, were now grown up, and this has been quite ground enough for some of Schubert's sentimental biographers, determined to surround their hero with the halo of an aristocratic attachment, to invent a story of his being in love with one of the young ladies. There is no foundation for the legend; in fact at the very moment when Schubert is supposed to have been basking in the smiles of his elegant *inamorata*, we find him complaining to a friend of his isolation, expressing the keenest regret for the society of his friends at Vienna, and even declaring that there was not a soul at Zelész with whom he could have any sensible conversation! Before the

end of the year Schubert was back in Vienna, which he did not again quit except for an occasional summer outing among the mountains. During one of these, which extended as far as Gastein, the "Grand Symphony" was written, which was afterwards dedicated to the Gesellschaft der Musik-Freunde. Whether this was an early draft of the famous symphony in C or a different work, as Sir George Grove believed, has never been satisfactorily settled. If it was a different work it is curious that it should have completely disappeared, and that there should be no entry for it in the catalogue of the Society's library, although the Society paid Schubert 100 gulden for it, and his letter of dedication is extant. On the other hand the symphony in C is in the library catalogue under the date 1828, although there is no separate record of its reception; and it appears plainly that the Society regarded it as its property, although it was found to be too difficult for performance and had to be abandoned after a few rehearsals. The fact that the score contains far more alterations than were usual with Schubert points to the possibility of his having withdrawn the symphony which he gave to the Society in 1826, revised it and returned it in 1828; and until an independent "Gastein symphony" turns up, this appears to be the most reasonable view to take.

During the last years of his life Schubert's health gave him cause for serious anxiety; in fact even in 1824 he speaks of it as irrecoverably gone. His incessant hard work, combined with late hours

and plenty of lively if innocent amusement, gradually undermined a constitution never in all probability very strong. Still, he seems to have made but little change in his manner of life, and he had no one to look after him or warn him of the risks he was running. His fame was gradually spreading, but he had to endure many rebuffs. His attempts to secure an official position were uniformly unsuccessful, sometimes through his own fault, as for instance when he lost a chance of being appointed conductor of the Court Theatre through refusing to alter the notes of a song to suit the failing voice of an antiquated prima donna. A bright spot in his career was the one concert of his own music that he ever gave. This took place in 1828, in the last year of his life, and appears to have been brilliantly successful. Had he lived, it would doubtless have been the forerunner of many similar triumphs. But his days were numbered, and after an illness, the horrors of which were exaggerated by loneliness and the absence of anything like proper nursing, he died on the 19th of November.

Schubert was, to borrow the phrase used by Tennyson of Mr Swinburne, "a reed through which all things blow into music." Music was his life-blood. He thought in music, felt in music as no other composer has ever done. It was to him not merely a means of expressing emotion, it took the place of emotion itself. His fertility in musical ideas is unparalleled in the history of music.

He had but to read a poem and its musical complement burst Minerva-like, full-grown from his brain. He wrote music as other men write a letter—like Shakespeare, rarely blotting a line. As Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare, it would have been better for him had he blotted thousands. His very fertility was a snare. Had it been less easy to him to write music, he would have taken more pains to master the principles of technique, in which he was always deficient. Towards the close of his life he seems to have realised this himself. It appears that his friends had often held up Beethoven's laborious methods of composition before him as an example, and after Beethoven's death he studied the MS. of "Fidelio" closely, comparing the different versions of various passages and tracing the gradual development of the composer's ideas. At the time the results of this unusual effort on his part were not conspicuous. He declared that he could see no object in slaving at music in this way, and said that Beethoven's first ideas seemed to him just as good as his last. Later, however, he realised his mistake. Shortly before his death he became possessed of the scores of some of Handel's oratorios. A close study of these showed him how much he had to learn in the matter of counterpoint, and he determined to take lessons with Sechter, a pundit of the day. One of the last visits that he paid was to Sechter, and a course of lessons was actually arranged for. A fortnight later he was dead. Schubert's lack of

technical musicianship is often felt in his instrumental and choral works, but in his songs he is supreme. With his amazing fertility of invention there went an extraordinary instinct for the special atmosphere of every song that he set. He goes to the heart of the poem with unerring directness. His friend Mayrhofer declared that he often did not understand the full force of his own poetry until he had heard it set to music by Schubert. Schubert was far more than a mere melodist, though in this respect few composers have equalled him. Modulation was one of his favourite devices. Occasionally he carries his use of this device to extravagant lengths, but as a rule he uses it with exquisite discretion and with thrilling beauty and force. His accompaniments are individual and original, and are always adapted to the subject of the song in a masterly manner. The subjects of his songs range over a wide field. He wrote more than six hundred, many to words by Goethe, Schiller, Scott, Shakespeare (these, of course, in German translations) and other great poets, some, it must be admitted, to mere doggerel, for his taste in poetry was by no means beyond reproach, though there are very few which do not contain some beauty of thought or expression. In his earlier years he was addicted to romantic and picturesque subjects, but as he grew older he inclined more to songs of an intimate and personal character, such as his two great song-cycles "Die Schöne Müllerin" and "Die Winterreise," which deal in the subtlest

fashion with the play of varying emotions and the development of feeling. Apart from the intrinsic beauty of his songs, they are historically important as being practically the foundation of the school of modern German song-writing. In this respect Schubert's position has been admirably defined by Sir George Grove: "Songs there were before him, those of Schulz, for instance, and of Zumsteeg, which he so greatly admired, and of Haydn and Mozart—touching, beautiful expressions of simple thought and feeling. But the song, as we know it in his hands, full of dramatic fire, poetry and pathos, set to no simple Volkslieder, but to long complex poems, the best poetry of the greatest poets, and an absolute reflection of every change and breath of sentiment in that poetry, with an accompaniment of the utmost force, fitness, and variety—such songs were his and his alone."

The Schubert whom we find in his songs is, as I have said, "a reed through which all things blow to music," a nature of exquisite sensibility, responsive to every poetical suggestion, alive to every claim for sympathy. This is the man viewed in relation to external circumstances; the inner man is pictured for us in his instrumental works, in which, unfettered by the claims of poetry, he poured forth his soul in music. And the picture is one of singular charm and attraction. We must not expect from Schubert the serene wisdom of Mozart nor the soaring imagination of Beethoven. Schubert had a gentle and childlike spirit, alert with noble impulses but

restricted in its range. Schubert was not like Beethoven, a great intellectual force. He died young, it is true, but his development was so rapid that his best work cannot be called immature, and there is nothing even in his latest productions that warrants us in assuming the probability of any further intellectual development. By a kind of superhuman instinct he divined in other men ideas foreign to his own nature and clothed them in fitting music. There is something almost miraculous in his setting of some of Goethe's lyrics, in the manner in which he keeps pace with the marvellous conceptions of that great poet; but his own music shows no attempt to face the baffling problems of life. The charm of Schubert lies in his eternal youthfulness. He is the musician of springtime; the generous ardour of budding manhood bubbles in his strains. His greatest and most characteristic work, the symphony in C, is an Odyssey of youth. It pictures for us the feelings of a young man starting upon the pilgrimage of life. The spirit of romance hovers over the opening notes—that mysterious call which seems to summon man to put away childish things. The allegro is in very truth a "Song of the Open Road," with its gay march-like rhythm and the full-blooded enthusiasm that animates every note of it. The andante takes us further afield. We seem to follow our hero through the dim aisles of a forest, where sunlight and shadow alternately chequer his path. How the leaves flicker and dance in the summer

breeze, and how sweetly the mysterious depths of woodland solitude breathe their secrets in his ears! The scherzo touches a lighter note, and in the marvellous finale the noble ardour of youth seems kindled to a fever of passionate aspiration, not without a touch of strange yearning, a hungering for beauty that has a curious pathos of its own. There is something singularly moving in the tenderness, purity, and boyish faith—almost credulity—revealed in this marvellous work. Happy Schubert to have died with his ideals unclouded by disillusion and remorse! Even when the bitterness of life and the cruelty of disappointment touch him, as in the first movement of the unfinished symphony in B minor, it is the unreasoning petulance of rebellious youth of which the music speaks, not as in Beethoven the grim tragedy of a man's sad war with fate. Similarly, in the famous slow movement of the quartet in D minor,—the variations on the melody of "Death and the Maiden," —which is, as it were, a musical counterpart to the often pictured Dance of Death, there is no suggestion of weird Holbeinesque horror. The attitude is rather that of the wide-eyed wonder of boyhood than the reasoned acquiescence and the serene fortitude of Beethoven and Mozart.

No musician was ever less of a teacher than Schubert. He lived in a world of his own apart from theories and dogmas, pouring forth the music that was in him at the dictate of his own genius. If the romantic movement touched him, he was

probably unconscious of it, and it is difficult to believe that in any circumstances he would have written otherwise than he did. Weber's literary attitude to music was impossible to him. He was a child of nature, singing as the linnets sing. Save in the realm of song-writing, in which his influence has been inestimable, he contributed nothing to musical development. He appears to have had little dramatic instinct, and all the attempts that have been made since his death to restore his operas to the stage have failed; nor do his masses and other church works appear to contain the germs of immortality. He was a born lyrist, and had he written nothing but his songs, his claim to rank among the great musicians would still be secure.

BERLIOZ

CHAPTER XII

BERLIOZ

HECTOR BERLIOZ is one of the most difficult of all musicians to discuss fairly. He appeals to us on many counts—as a musician pure and simple, as a revolutionary and as a man of letters. We may like him or dislike him, but we cannot ignore him. No man has left his mark more enduringly upon the history of music. Orchestral music as we now know it can be said almost without exaggeration to be his creation. Strauss, Tchaikovsky and all the modern masters of orchestral expression are in a sense his children. It is true perhaps that his own musical achievements are not destined for immortality. His interests were too varied, his range of sympathy was too wide for him to succeed as a pure musician. He tried to make music do too much, but in the effort—whether we write it down a failure or not—he opened new worlds to the ken of man, worlds which have proved a goodly heritage to those who came after him.

The incidents of Berlioz's career and the various influences with which he came into contact affected his music profoundly, and in considering his works it is necessary to bear in mind his environment more than

in the case of any other great musician. There was little in his upbringing that tended to foster his musical genius, in fact few musicians found more difficulty in reaching the goal of their desires. He was born on the 11th of December 1803, at La Côte St André, near Grenoble. His father was a country doctor, who intended that his son should follow his own profession. As a boy Berlioz was allowed to amuse himself with music, but he had no regular musical education, and when he went to Paris in 1822 to study at the School of Medicine, his musical attainments embraced only a moderate knowledge of the flageolet and a smattering of harmony picked up from Catel's standard work on the subject. Paris soon showed him in what direction his real career lay. The dissecting-room disgusted him, and the library of the Conservatoire opened a haven of refuge. His determination to relinquish the study of medicine entailed a rupture with his parents, but admission to the Conservatoire and lessons from Lesueur consoled him, though for many years he had a hard struggle for existence and had to support himself by singing in the chorus of one of the minor theatres. At the Conservatoire, too, his revolutionary views upon music made him enemies, of whom the most bitter and relentless was the director Cherubini. However he never lost heart, and he was rewarded in 1830 by winning the Prix de Rome. He had already written a good deal of music, most of it drawn from the literary sources which were to exercise so powerful an influence

upon him throughout his career. Shakespeare had given him the Fantasia on "The Tempest," Goethe the "Eight Scenes from Faust," Scott the "Waverley" overture, while though the extraordinary "Symphonie Fantastique" was ostensibly a nightmare of his own devising, it was as a matter of fact a musical exposition of the popular Byronism of the day—an attitude of mind which is reflected in much of Berlioz's music with singular fidelity. Berlioz was not happy in Italy, and after eighteen months at Rome he obtained leave to return. How far his own marvellous description of that return is to be accepted as true may be left to the taste and fancy of the reader. The important point is that his Italian trip resulted in more music, of which the "King Lear" and "Corsair" overtures —further tributes to Shakespeare and Byron— formed the chief part. Berlioz was fated to carry his literary predilections into private life with lamentable results. In Henrietta Smithson, an Irish actress who played in Paris with Kemble, he found an embodiment of Shakespeare's heroines. He married his Ophelia in 1833—for the strange tale of his courtship the reader may again be referred to the composer's autobiography—but the union was not a happy one. Berlioz's music was not popular, and in order to keep the wolf from the door he was forced to take to musical journalism, a task which his soul abhorred. He used to complain that feuilleton-writing left him no time for composition, but as a matter of fact his journalistic

period was singularly fruitful in music. Between the years 1833 and 1840 he produced some of his most important works, including the "Requiem," "Harold en Italie," "Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale," "Roméo et Juliette" and the opera "Benvenuto Cellini."

In 1838 came a welcome present of 20,000 francs, conveyed to him by the hand of Paganini, but now said to have been the gift of M. Bertin, the proprietor of the *Journal des Débats*, the newspaper for which Berlioz principally wrote. This relieved him for the time from the bonds of journalism, and enabled him to visit Germany, where his music was far better known and more justly appreciated than in France. His German tour was the beginning of a series of foreign triumphs, but no news of his successes abroad could convince his compatriots that they had a great composer in their midst. In 1847 he paid the first of a series of visits to London, having been engaged by Jullien to conduct an opera season at Covent Garden. Both on this occasion and when he came later the man and his music were popular in England. His "Benvenuto" failed at Covent Garden in 1853, largely, as Berlioz himself believed and declared, owing to a cabal organised by Costa, who was jealous of French conductors and composers; but his "Roméo" and other works, performed during his conductorship of the New Philharmonic Society in 1852 and 1855, pleased press and public alike. In Paris he never won genuine popularity during his lifetime. The great

works of his later years, "La Damnation de Faust," the "Te Deum" and "Les Troyens," received but scanty recognition, and the official honours that at length were decreed to him—his election to the Académie de Beaux Arts, and his appointment to the post of librarian at his old Alma Mater, the Conservatoire—came too late to heal the wounds dealt by a lifetime of neglect. Berlioz died in 1869, a soured and disappointed man, unable for his peace of mind to foresee the influence that his music was to exercise upon the development of his art and the place that he himself was destined to occupy in the affections of his fellow-countrymen.

The secret at once of Berlioz's weakness and of his strength lies in the essence of his own genius—he was as much a poet as a musician. His imagination was literary rather than musical. He did not conceive in terms of music but in terms of literature, and afterwards translated his conception into the language of sound. This does not affect the value of his work in the extension of musical form and in orchestral technique, but it seriously affects the value of his own productions. It is this that gives Berlioz's orchestral music what I may call its experimental character. He does not give the impression of recording emotion in music as Beethoven and Schubert do; he is always trying to find the right musical equivalent for ideas that presented themselves to his mind in a different medium. This is by no means the same thing as saying that Berlioz worked from a poetic basis. A

poetic basis can generate musical ideas as in Weber's "Concertstück," which was written while Berlioz was still slaving among his gallipots at La Côte St André, but in Berlioz's case it generated literary ideas, and between the two lies a world of difference. The difference between Weber and Berlioz in this respect is just the difference between good and bad art, between a man working in a medium that he fully understands and one struggling with forces that he has not properly learnt to master. Weber, for all his poetic basis, is never anything but a musician. His ideas come to him in a musical form, and he develops them in a musical way. Berlioz, striving to put his literary ideas into a musical form, is continually outraging music, neglecting her limitations and forcing her to express things that by her nature she cannot express. The contrast between the two embodies the whole squabble about programme music. Some writers on music still continue to affirm that music cannot express definite emotions, and quote the works of Berlioz as an instance. Had Berlioz contented himself with making music express definite emotions his works would have been a triumphant refutation of this absurd proposition. It was because he tried to make music express physical facts that he failed. Mr Hadow, in his article on Berlioz in the new edition of Grove's Dictionary, says naïvely: "It is as idle to inquire the meaning of a composition as to inquire the meaning of a sunset." Why, in the name of all

that is reasonable, should a musical composition, the work of human imagination and industry, be compared to a natural phenomenon? The two have nothing in common. Music may and often has a definite meaning which it is perfectly legitimate to inquire; but music, like all other arts, has limitations. Its province is to depict emotions, not to record facts. It was because Berlioz with his poet's imagination did not recognise these limitations, which a true musician instinctively feels, that so much of his orchestral music must be written down a failure. But even in his failure he accomplished great things. He brought new elements into music and gave her new resources. He was a true child of the romantic renascence, a scorner of boundaries and a leaper over the fences of tradition. If some of his experiments recoiled upon his own head, others bore lasting fruit in the subsequent history of music.

To call him the creator of programme music is absurd. Programme music there had been before him in many senses. In one sense, as I have already said, all music is programme music, since music that is worthy of the name must almost of necessity be an expression of feeling, or at any rate of a mood, however vague and indeterminate that feeling or that mood may be. In a narrower sense Beethoven's symphonies may be called programme music, being unquestionably records of definite personal emotions, even when not, as in the case of the Pastoral symphony, actually descriptive. Nor can the name of pro-

gramme music be denied to the "Coriolan" overture, in which Beethoven, putting personal emotion aside, describes in music the heroic character of the great Roman. But it is a long step from Beethoven to Berlioz—from the "Coriolan" overture to the "Symphonie Fantastique." What Berlioz did that was new was to take a definite poetic narrative and translate it into the language of sound, following the development of the story step by step, as though he were writing a poem or painting a picture. Even this, as we have seen, had been attempted by Weber, but Berlioz carried the idea much further, using infinitely more elaborate technique, though, as has been already said, his musical taste was not unerring enough to carry him over the difficulties that beset the pioneer. But though Berlioz's own works are marred by grave defects and do not appear to have in them the seeds of immortality, his influence upon those who came after him can hardly be over-estimated. He enlarged the boundaries of musical form, he opened new vistas of expression to the world. Not merely by his sublime disregard of tradition and by his restless search for new means of expression is he the herald of the revolution in music that the nineteenth century witnessed, but his extraordinary mastery of the orchestra practically revolutionised the whole system of instrumental music. Berlioz handled the orchestra as nobody had handled it before his day. He is the first of the great colourists, indeed to him colour was at least

as important as design. He knew every secret of instrumental effect, wielding his orchestra as a painter wields his brush and palette. His famous "Traité de l'Orchestration" marks an epoch in the history of music. The book is like a romance. To Berlioz's eye the orchestra was a land of fairies peopled with beings whom his magic touch could call into life. He talks of musical instruments almost as if they were alive, dilating upon the special qualities of each and its capacity for expressing certain shades of emotion with a knowledge and sympathy that seem to have been born in him. Berlioz has often been compared to Victor Hugo, another child of the romantic movement. What Victor Hugo did for poetry Berlioz did for music; the verbal magic of the one, his delight in the sheer beauty of words, and his power of drawing sudden loveliness from their combined harmonies recalls the marvellous orchestral touch of the other and his rapture in the mere glory of orchestral colour. But Berlioz was not the accomplished artist that Hugo was, and we find him too often playing his delightful tricks with the orchestra to the detriment of the musical effect of the work he had in hand, while Hugo's magical power over words is but rarely used save in subservience to the design of a poem.

The essential qualities of Berlioz's genius made it only natural that his best work should be found in his vocal compositions. There are marvellous things in the "Symphonie Fantastique" and "Harold en Italie." The unmistakable seal

of genius is upon them, but neither is satisfactory as a whole. Apart from the hopelessness of the task which Berlioz set himself in attempting to put into music things essentially unmusical, the attitude of mind betrayed in both works is fundamentally insincere. Berlioz is himself, of course, the hero of both works, but is it the real Berlioz we find there? Is it not rather Berlioz as he wished to appear to the world, Berlioz seen through very Byronic spectacles indeed? Berlioz in the guise of the Pilgrim of Eternity, the melancholy youth who has drunk of all fountains and is satisfied with none, seemed no doubt an impressive figure to the man himself; but it is considerably less impressive to us, who in music as well as in literature find the Byronic pose of the thirties the most insufferable thing in the world. Even in his "Roméo et Juliette," that strange and unsatisfactory compound of symphony, cantata and opera, the Byronic Berlioz is still with us. Berlioz was an enthusiastic admirer of Shakespeare and had saturated himself with Shakespeare's plays, but in his Romeo there is a great deal more of Byron than of Shakespeare. Berlioz's love-music is nearly always maudlin and affected, and the love-scene in "Roméo et Juliette" has not a suggestion of the virile passion of Shakespeare.

To say that Berlioz's music is best when it is least subjective is almost the same thing as saying that he was a great artist but not a great man—and this is perhaps the truth about him put as

briefly as possible. Berlioz's personality, to be perfectly frank, is not engaging. It is possible to sympathise with his trials and disappointments —and he had many—without feeling any overmastering admiration for the man himself. Berlioz was really something very much more than a querulous *poseur*, but often it becomes necessary to remind oneself of the fact. He was naturally self-conscious, and his self-consciousness was increased by his lifelong struggle to win recognition from the world in which he lived. He was emphatically not one of those men to whom art is enough. Success was the breath of life to him, and he fought for it with all his strength. His constant endeavour to impress the world with a sense of his greatness undoubtedly affected his music. It led him into extravagances and sensationalism, which possibly in his later days he may have deplored. A man of this type is found at his best in works which lead him away from himself, and thus we find Berlioz's strongest and finest music not in those works such as the "Symphonie Fantastique" and "Harold en Italie," in which, roughly speaking, he is writing about himself, but in his "Te Deum," his "Requiem," and his "Damnation de Faust," in which a fine subject appeals to his imagination, and takes him into a new world of thought and emotion. In his two great ecclesiastical works we have him at his best. Berlioz worked best with a vast canvas and a broad scheme of colour. The "Te

Deum" and "Requiem" are colossal in conception, and carried out with splendid mastery of detail. There is a primitive grandeur about this music of his, which has rarely been reached by other composers. Heine said of Berlioz: "He makes me think of vast mammoths and other extinct animals, of fabulous empires filled with fabulous crimes, and other enormous possibilities"—a happy description of the dim, cloudy grandeur of such splendid achievements of musical imagination as, for instance, the "Judex crederis," a conception of the Last Judgment which may well be ranked with that of Michael Angelo. In the "Damnation de Faust" the scheme is less grandiose, but the colour is richer and more varied, and the emotion more poignant and searching. Berlioz sent the kernel of his work—the eight scenes from "Faust" which he wrote in 1828—to Goethe, but the offering was never acknowledged. Probably the sedulous Zelter, whose life was devoted to keeping all other musicians outside the Olympian circle, intercepted it or at any rate prevented Goethe from studying it. Whether Goethe would have approved of it as an interpretation of his own poem may be doubted, but he would have appreciated the earnestness of the musician. Berlioz's Faust is a very different person from Goethe's, and the work as a whole is somewhat unsatisfactory, being too dramatic in style for the concert room and not dramatic enough for the stage, as recent attempts to play it as an opera have conclusively proved

but Berlioz put his best and most living work into it, and if not altogether successful as a transcription of Goethe's "Faust," it is unquestionably the finest piece of music inspired by the poem that has been given to the world as yet. Berlioz's operas show as plainly as does his "Faust" that he had not the dramatic gift. His "Troyens" has many noble pages, often showing unmistakable traces of the enthusiasm for Gluck that was one of Berlioz's earliest and most lasting emotions, but the atmosphere of the work is epic rather than dramatic, and on the stage "Les Troyens" leaves the spectator cold.

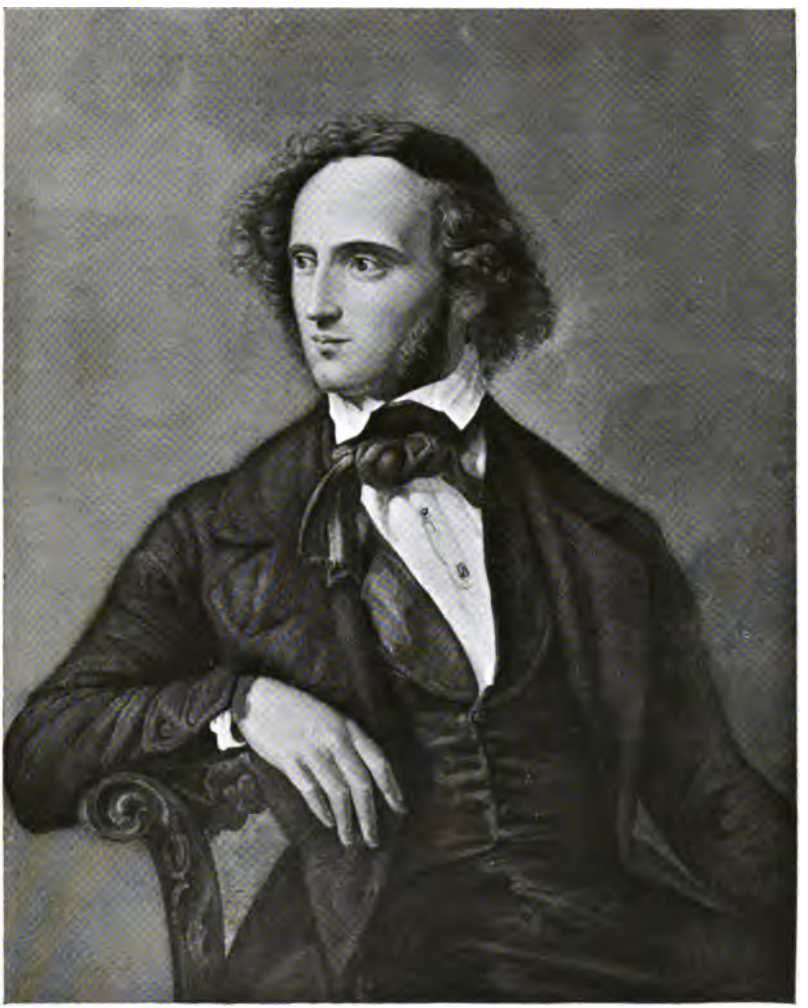
Of all great composers—and in many senses the title cannot be denied to Berlioz—few have left behind them less music that can sincerely be called great, and as time goes on it is probable that Berlioz will figure less and less actively as a direct influence in music. An indirect influence he must always be. The man who gave us the modern orchestra and showed us how to use it must always be a historical figure of supreme interest, even when, as Wagner aptly said, the musician in him is buried beneath the ruins of his own machines.

CHAPTER XIII

MENDELSSOHN AND SCHUMANN

THOSE who are fond of moralising on the secrets of human success and failure can find a subject ready to their hand in the careers of Mendelssohn and Schumann. The history of music has few more striking instances to show of a reversal of contemporary verdicts than in the case of these two composers.

Mendelssohn's career was one prolonged blaze of triumph from start to finish. From his successes as a childish prodigy to the production of "Elijah" he scarcely knew what the word failure meant. Fortune smiled on him from the first; ample means opened every avenue to notoriety; an admirable education and his own good taste gave him the general culture often denied by adverse circumstances to musicians. His personal charm won him friends in all ranks of society; his brilliant feats of virtuosity enchanted the public; he basked in the sunshine of royal favour; critics obsequiously greeted him as "the last of the Titans"; his career was a triumphal progress; his death was mourned as an European calamity. Now his music, save for the very few works that have survived the collapse of his reputation, is ignored or



MENDELSSOHN

forgotten. His fame is the butt of every youthful critic anxious to flesh his maiden sword. His influence on the modern world of music, so far as it can be said to exist, is a theme for regret and contempt. Schumann, on the other hand, lived and died practically unrecognised. His works were considered "eccentric" by the public at large, while in some quarters a systematic crusade was carried on against everything that he produced. Silent and abstracted, moody and unpractical, no performer and a poor conductor, he had not the necessary gifts to thrust himself into the favour of the music-loving world. His youth was a struggle for bare subsistence, his later years were clouded by ill health and insanity. After his death, the tide gradually turned. Largely through the efforts of his devoted widow, one of the most gifted pianists of the nineteenth century, his music gradually became known and more gradually won its way to esteem. He is now recognised not merely as one of the greatest of modern musicians by the intrinsic value of his creative genius, but as an influence second to none in the moulding of the thought of subsequent generations. In the case of Mendelssohn and Schumann the revenge of time has been singularly complete. They are the Dives and Lazarus of modern music. Mendelssohn in his day enjoyed the good things of this world, the sweets of success and the pleasures of popularity, while Schumann metaphorically sat as a beggar at his gate; and if Schumann now lies in Abraham's

bosom while Mendelssohn endures what Keats called "the fierce hell of criticism," they do but reap the fruits of their own sowing in a manner complete enough to satisfy all the requirements of poetic justice. The diversity of their fates is the more striking because superficially the two men had a good deal in common. They were not merely contemporaries but friends, and each professed a warm admiration for the music of the other; each one influenced the other's form and style of expression to a considerable degree, so that in many of their less important and less characteristic works, the resemblances between the two are curiously close. But in essentials the two men were radically different. Mendelssohn had the facility and the adaptability of a Jew, Schumann the whole-heartedness and sincerity of a German; Mendelssohn having caught the popular ear, set himself, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps consciously —it is hard to say which—to retain it. He did retain it, with what results we now behold, yet it would perhaps be unfair to accuse him of deliberately relinquishing lofty ideals for the sake of immediate popularity, though much of his music compels the suggestion. It is probable that he put forth the best that was in him, that he honestly believed the friends who assured him that he was producing masterpiece after masterpiece, and that he would be very much surprised if he could know the ultimate fate of the greater part of his music.

Schumann was altogether different. There is

nothing in his music that suggests anything like a bid for popularity. His ideals were high, and he strove to reach them with absolute sincerity. If he fell short, as he often did, it was from failure in the technique of expression, not from weakness of purpose. He was as whole-hearted in his pursuit of the highest and best that art can offer as any musician who ever took pen in hand, and he has his reward.

There is no need to linger over the incidents of Mendelssohn's life, which save in a general sense affected his music but little. It is useless to speculate upon what he might have been had his career been less uniformly successful. It is difficult to believe that the stress of misfortune would have dignified his slight and elegant talent or given a severer tone to a mind that seems to have been essentially lacking in profundity.

Mendelssohn's genius was objective. His sensitive nature responded freely to external influence, and he is happiest when definitely inspired by pictorial impression. Such works as his "Hebrides" overture, suggested by a visit to the western islands of Scotland, or his "Midsummer Night's Dream" overture, in which he is writing up to an avowed subject, or his Italian and Scottish symphonies, which are to a great extent pictures of scenery or recollections of travel, are among his best works. In purely abstract music he is almost always poor in suggestion and pedestrian in inspiration. His light-hearted nature bubbles up in many pretty

scherzos, but his slow movements have but rare touches of sincere feeling, and as a whole his instrumental music in spite of its perfect form and admirable workmanship scarcely deserves to be rescued from the oblivion into which it has already fallen. In such works as his "Hebrides" overture Mendelssohn helped forward the march of modern music in some slight degree, but his principal influence was conveyed through his oratorios. "St Paul" is rather a hybrid work. In general scheme it is obviously inspired by Bach, for whom Mendelssohn had a great veneration, and whose fame he did much to revive. It is plain that when he sat down to write it he had the Matthew Passion in his mind's eye. The disposal of the narrative, the structure of the choruses, the introduction of reflective solos and the use of chorales recalls the manner if not the matter of Bach. Writing in this mood Mendelssohn attained a certain dignity of style, but his music is often arid and expressionless and not unfrequently suggests the laborious scholar rather than the inspired musician. By the side of these attempted excursions into the domain of Bach, there is much in "St Paul" of Mendelssohn himself—suavely melodious solos and clever little pieces of musical impressionism which, however intrinsically agreeable, harmonise but ill with the grandiose scheme of the work. The truth is that the life of St Paul was a subject outside the range of Mendelssohn's talent. It deals too much with abstract ideas and too little with merely

external things for him ever to have made much of it. When he gets an opportunity for a piece of scene-painting he at once rises to the occasion, as in the heathen chorus, "O be gracious," which is a remarkably clever little vignette, catching the spirit of graceful soulless Pagan ceremonial very adroitly. But the greater part of the work is too obviously insincere to outlast the collapse of Mendelssohn's personal popularity. In Germany it is, I believe, now finally laid upon the shelf, and in England its appearances are but fitful, though the popularity of "Elijah" prevents it from entirely disappearing. "Elijah" is at once less pretentious and more individual, and therefore infinitely more successful as a work of art. The subject, with its almost unbroken succession of striking and picturesque scenes, suited Mendelssohn admirably. The taste of the day compelled the librettist to introduce a certain amount of reflective matter, in which, as was always the case when he dealt with abstractions, Mendelssohn failed, and the close of the work with its suggestion of allegorical symbolism shows the limits of his talent unmistakably. But a great deal of "Elijah" must be praised almost unreservedly even by those to whom Mendelssohn's music is far from being sympathetic. The old but just criticism on "Elijah," that it is a good opera spoiled, explains both its weakness and its strength. "Elijah" is most successful when it breaks the bounds of true oratorio form and invades the province of opera. Many of the scenes in it are

conceived almost entirely in the spirit of opera, notably the dialogue between Jezebel and the chorus and the finale to the first part. In discussing the oratorios of Handel I tried to indicate the limits of oratorio form by comparing an oratorio to an epic and an opera to a drama. In Mendelssohn's work these limits are constantly ignored, and the result is that "Elijah" is throughout a compromise, and however successful isolated scenes in it may be, its lack of homogeneity is fatal to it as a work of art. In the history of oratorio "Elijah" marks a turning-point. With it begins an era of decadence. Its influence has affected sacred music much as Schumann's "Paradise and the Peri," though in a less degree, has affected secular music, giving rise to a whole class of works which hover, as it were, between epic and drama, partaking wholly of the character of neither, and missing almost entirely the effect which is won by the legitimate development of a grand design.

The classic instance in modern times of a work of this kind is Berlioz's "Faust," a work of extraordinary genius, which however it be performed is always unsatisfactory in result. On the continent it is now given as an opera at least as often as in its original form, but it is no more successful than when performed as a cantata. On the stage it seems to crave the concert-room, in the concert-room it demands the stage. "Elijah" is, of course, less fatally inconsistent in form than Berlioz's work, but the faults of the latter are present

in "Elijah" in a lesser degree. The dramatic parts of the work make the epic parts seem dull, the epic parts make the dramatic seem flashy and sensational. The two *genres* can never be combined satisfactorily, and the example of "Elijah" has led many composers to musical disaster. The fact that Berlioz's "Faust" and Mendelssohn's "Elijah" were produced in the same year (1846) is a remarkable instance of how similar ideas work independently in different environments at the same time. At that time the tendency towards new development was, as one may say, in the air. While Wagner in his operas was encroaching on the limits of drama, deserting lyrical expression in favour of dramatic, Mendelssohn and Berlioz, each in his own way, were pressing operatic methods into the service of oratorio. The result in each case was the formation of something like a new art-form, but while the genius of Wagner welded the differing elements into a whole of marvellous beauty and completeness, neither of his contemporaries, in spite of individual genius, appears to have achieved anything like equal success. In spite of "Elijah," dramatic oratorio remains a hybrid and unsatisfactory form of art, and though Mendelssohn's talent succeeded in producing a work that has retained its popularity for half a century, he cannot be said to have affected the history of music to anything like the extent that Wagner affected it; and indeed there are many signs that at the present time our composers, realising the impossibilities of the dramatic

oratorio as an art form, are endeavouring to return to the epic form of oratorio sanctified by the genius of Handel though naturally in a form more in harmony with modern developments of musical expression.

Schumann's career as a musician, in spite of the enormous influence he has exerted upon the subsequent developments of his art, is to a certain extent unsatisfactory. He attempted a great deal, but save in the smaller kinds of music, such as his songs, pianoforte pieces and chamber music, he rarely touched complete success. There is much that is wonderful in his symphonies and his choral works, even in his one opera "Genoveva," but as a whole they are too often baffling and elusive. Sometimes it is difficult not to feel that Schumann was more of a poet than a musician, and that he would have said what he had to say more impressively in words than in notes. His grasp of the greater forms of music often seems nerveless and incomplete, and thus his most exquisite ideas often miss their due effect by reason of the insufficiency of their presentment. His natural gifts were marvellous in their richness and variety. No musician was ever endowed with a more delicate and poetical imagination. Great he cannot be called in the sense that Handel, Bach and Beethoven are great, nor, though in nature he was more akin to Mozart, had he a tithe of Mozart's wide humanity. But in his own sphere he is unequalled. He had a mind of exquisite sensibility, a touching and child-like purity of thought and aspiration. Schumann's music is

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the very antipodes of modern vulgarity and self-seeking. Never was there a more whole-hearted artist, nor one more sincere in the expression of his own thought and feeling. It is curious to compare him in this with Mendelssohn, for whose music he nevertheless entertained a genuine admiration. While Mendelssohn, consciously or unconsciously, had his eye continually on the public, writing with what seems to us an obvious desire to please the popular taste, Schumann lived in a world of his own into which no suspicion of the struggle for existence intruded. His love for Clara Wieck was the moving impulse of his life. It moulded his genius, and gave birth to much of his best music. Apart from this there is but little in his uneventful career that need be taken into account in considering his music. He was born in 1810, and studied law until he was twenty, when his mother allowed him to give it up in favour of music. His early desire to be a pianist was frustrated by his own attempt to avoid the tedium of practising by a mechanical trick, which ended in crippling one of his fingers altogether. After his marriage in 1840 he drifted from town to town, but his experiments as pedagogue and conductor were unsuccessful, owing to his health and temperament. The end of his life was clouded by nervous affections and insanity, and his last two years were spent in a lunatic asylum. He died in 1856. Schumann, as I have said, was pre-eminently a poet-musician. In his music the poetic basis is all-important, not merely

in his larger works, but in the slightest of his pianoforte pieces, in which we find perhaps his most individual expression. Even when no title is affixed to these we have the composer's authority for attributing them to a definite poetical inspiration; as, for instance, in the case of the "Novelletten," which he described as long romantic stories, though he declined to label them with their respective meanings. It is this that gives to Schumann's music its characteristic note—its suggestiveness. His music may or may not suggest the actual picture that was in the composer's mind when he wrote, but it is alive with meaning. Schumann's music is brimful of ideas—of poetical ideas, that is to say, as opposed to purely musical ones. Regarded as music pure and simple, if that could be, it is often weak and inefficient. Schumann's symphonies, for instance, by the side of Beethoven's, apart from their poor, clumsy scoring, are sadly amateurish from the technical point of view. Beethoven's symphonies, as we are often told by those who dislike the smallest suggestion of programme music, can be heartily enjoyed without any knowledge of what they are about. The mere construction of them, the development of the themes, the treatment of the melodic and harmonic material are in themselves a delight. With Schumann it is not so. He demands in his hearer a mood corresponding to his own. You must read the story he has to tell or his music will fail to charm you. This is why he was so long in coming

to his own. He had to train the world to appreciate his point of view. In his day the poetic basis of music was little understood. It was enough that it should furnish a concourse of sweet sounds, arranged according to established principles. In spite of Beethoven and Schubert—though in Schumann's life-time Schubert as an instrumental composer was little better understood than Schumann himself—the world had not learnt that music can be used by a poet to express his emotions as certainly as language and painting. In bringing about this desirable end Schumann himself was the prime agent. He is the apostle of modern music in a sense that perhaps applies to no other composer—not, it need scarcely be said, with regard to technique, for in handling his material he was always something of an amateur, but in his conception of music, of its mission and its capability. This is the real importance of Schumann, and it is this that gives him the right to a place beside the greatest masters of music.

Schumann's musical history is a curious one, being divided into sharply defined periods, during which he devoted himself almost entirely to one species of composition. Thus up to the year 1839 he wrote hardly anything but pianoforte pieces. In 1840, with his engagement and marriage to Clara Wieck, came a year of song. "I am now composing nothing but songs, great and small," he wrote to a friend. "I can hardly tell you how delightful it is to write for the voice as compared with instrumental

composition." But by the end of the year his passion for song-writing was exhausted, and he turned to a fresh field. 1841 was devoted to symphonies, of which he wrote three. In 1842 he turned to chamber music, producing three string quartets, the pianoforte quintet and quartet, and a pianoforte trio. In 1843 he left chamber music for choral works, producing "Paradise and the Peri," and in the following year the music to Goethe's "Faust." In 1847 came his one opera, "Genoveva," and in the later years of his life he produced works of various kinds indiscriminately. It is not easy to say in which department of his art Schumann excelled. Whatever he wrote showed the workings of a singularly original mind. Of all the great masters of music he owed less than any to his predecessors. Speaking in general terms, he is the inheritor of the romantic spirit of Beethoven and Schubert; but, judged in detail, he owes but little to either. Much of Beethoven's and Schubert's music is purely personal in tone. We seem to hear the men speaking in music, pouring forth their joys and sorrows in the language they knew best. Schumann's genius, on the other hand, is far more objective in quality. His imagination is fanciful rather than profound, delighting in subjects of fantastic grace and delicacy, which he knew how to sketch with a marvellously light and vivid touch. His earlier piano works, such as "Papillons," "Carnaval," and "Kinderscenen," brought an entirely new note into music. These wonderful little series

of vignettes, delicate and tender as the creations of Watteau, opened new worlds of beauty to art. In works like the great Fantasia in C and the sonata in F sharp minor a deeper note is touched, but the prevailing characteristic of Schumann is always romantic grace rather than profound handling of emotion.

Similarly in his songs, although passion is treated with infinite variety, it is rather in the tenderer and more plaintive aspects of love that he excels. He rarely rises to grandeur of expression, and many of his love-songs have more than a touch of morbid feeling. No one has ever shown a subtler art in transferring the nuances of feeling into music, as for instance in the song-cycle "Dichterliebe"; but Schumann has no pretence to Schubert's range of thought, and as a song-writer he must be ranked far below his predecessor. His symphonies are handicapped by dull and ineffective scoring, which makes against an adequate comprehension of their beauty; but in fundamental brain-work they are as fine as anything he wrote. That in B flat, which Schumann himself christened his "Spring Symphony," is the general favourite. It is full of the rapture and intoxication of the spring. It is, in the Meredithian sense, a "reading of earth" more definitely than anything previously written in music. Even less than Beethoven's Pastoral symphony is it a mere piece of scene-painting, though it has many touches that speak of an exquisite feeling for natural beauty. It has a delicious, almost acrid,

freshness of atmosphere. It sings of the rising sap, of the swelling bud, of wild bird-raptures in the clear March heavens, and of the passionate sense of unfolding manhood. All that spring has ever meant to a poet is here sung in accents that thrill the soul with a strange enchantment. The symphony in B flat was written at the happiest period of Schumann's life. He had just married Clara Wieck, and life seemed to be opening brightly before him. His joy is divinely mirrored in this work. Gay it cannot be called, even in its lightest moments, for gaiety rarely if ever came to Schumann. Ardour is rather its prevailing note, touched from time to time with seriousness, and even solemnity, for Schumann's joy was a passion rooted deep in his being, not the light-hearted laughter of men like Mendelssohn.

The symphony in C is a strange and striking contrast to that in B flat. Schumann has told us himself in what circumstances it was written :— "I sketched it out while suffering severe physical pain; indeed, I may well call it the struggle of my mind which influenced this, and by which I sought to beat off my disease." Truly the hand of disease is heavy on this work. There is something hectic, something feverish about it. It has always seemed to me to tell some such story as that of John Keats the poet, with his passionate struggle for fame, and his wild, rebellious beating against the dungeon bars that imprisoned his genius. The slow movement is a love-song of such intense and con-

suming fervour as music has rarely known. Schumann has been called morbid, and such movements as this give colour to the accusation. It has more than a suggestion of unhealthiness, even of unmanliness. There are certain phrases in Keats' letters to Fanny Brawne, his "swooning admiration" for her beauty, or such a passage as this: "I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute"—which to my ears ring with the same diseased note as this love-song of Schumann's. Their beauty cannot be disputed, but it is the beauty of decay. The symphony closes in a wild tempest of passion, frenzy and despair, and even in places suggests the insanity which was destined to cloud the close of Schumann's life. It is, if not the greatest of Schumann's works, one of the most personal and interesting—terribly so, indeed, to the student of his mind. More attractive to the general hearer are the symphony in D minor, so singularly suggestive in the delicate flavour of its romantic atmosphere, and the "Rhenish" symphony in E flat, which is frankly a piece of programme music, but programme music of a perfectly legitimate kind. It was inspired by the river Rhine, and depicts the emotions engendered by the contemplation of that historic stream. The broad flow of the river itself, the rich meadow-lands along its banks, the rustic merrymakings of the dwellers on its shores, and the solemn splendour of the great cathedral at

Cologne — of these Schumann has woven a symphony of epic grandeur which, though lacking the personal interest of the symphonies in B flat and C, is one of the noblest and most dignified musical compositions given to the world since the death of Beethoven. Space forbids me to discuss in detail the piano quartet and quintet or the piano concerto, three works which many critics would select as the most perfect that Schumann ever produced. Technically they are far more accomplished than the symphonies, while in different ways they are all three markedly characteristic of his tender and romantic genius. Historically too they are as important as anything he wrote, since the influence of the quartet and quintet, at any rate, on subsequent writers of chamber music, notably upon Brahms, can hardly be overestimated. Schumann is curiously difficult to sum up in a word; he is so various, he counts for so much. Perhaps the chief reason of his supreme importance in the history of nineteenth century music lies in what may be called the poetical character of his music. As a poet handles the various forms of poetry, writing now an ode, now a sonnet, now a lyric, and rising at times to a drama or an epic, using the form that instinct or experience tells him is best suited to express his thought, so Schumann ranged through the various forms of music, passing in turn from pianoforte music to songs, from chamber music to symphonies. This sedulous care in adapting means to end, in selecting

the form most congenial to the expression of each mood and emotion in turn, was not of course altogether a new thing to music, but until Schumann's day its artistic importance had not been fully recognized. Schumann's legacy to the world is priceless in many ways, but this is on the whole his most individual contribution to the building of the shining citadel of art.

CHAPTER XIV

CHOPIN AND LISZT

ONE characteristic, and by no means an unimportant one, of the history of nineteenth century music, is the tendency of composers to specialize in certain departments of their art. In older days a man wrote music without any regard for the special medium through which it was to see the light. Nothing was commoner in the days of Bach and Handel than for a composer to adapt a violin concerto for the harpsichord and *vice versâ*, or to turn an organ-piece into a choral motet. Even in Beethoven's day the same thing happened sometimes. Beethoven himself made a piano concerto out of his famous violin concerto, and converted an octet for wind instruments into a string quintet. As the nineteenth century advanced and the feeling for colour as opposed to line developed, it was natural that greater stress should be laid upon the medium employed and upon the special qualities of each instrument for certain phases of expression. The great advances made in the manufacture of instruments helped the movement forward no less than the development of executive technique, though, as in earlier days, it is difficult here to distinguish precisely between cause and effect. How far, for

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instance, the greater elaboration of orchestral music since Beethoven's day was the cause or result of the improvements in orchestral instruments would be a nice point to decide, or how far the enormous development of pianoforte technique advanced or was advanced by the revolution in mechanism that occurred between 1820 and 1850.

The first of the great specialists of the nineteenth century was Berlioz, whose instinct for handling the orchestra amounted to genius, and who wrote hardly anything in which the orchestra did not play a conspicuous part. Another great specialist was Chopin, whose knowledge of and sympathy for the piano was fully as remarkable as that of Berlioz for the orchestra. Chopin wrote scarcely anything but piano music, and nothing in which the piano did not bear its part. He probed the secrets of the piano as no one before him had done, and he left nothing to be discovered regarding its legitimate use as a means of expression. After his day, as we shall see, piano technique advanced upon a path which carried it towards a more orchestral style, but although new and splendid possibilities have thus been placed within the reach of modern pianists, they are only to be attained by the sacrifice of what is distinctive in the instrument. Chopin's perfect taste assured him that the piano was as a matter of fact more effective when it was content to be a piano and did not try to imitate an orchestra.

Chopin's childhood was very like the childhood

of other boy-pianists. He was born in 1809 near Warsaw of a father who was French by birth but had emigrated to Poland, and a Polish mother. Although his father was a schoolmaster, his general education was sadly neglected, but in music his studies were well looked after. He learnt the piano from Adalbert Zywny and composition from Joseph Elsner, both men of tried experience. Later in life he was often dubbed an impostor and a charlatan, but as a matter of fact few pianists of his time had a sounder or more practical knowledge of the science of music. As a boy he played at concerts in various parts of Poland, winning applause by his brilliant faculty of improvisation, but his serious début took place in 1829, when he played in Vienna for the first time and took the public of the capital by storm. In the following year he embarked upon a concert tour, which took him to Breslau, Dresden, Prague, Vienna, Munich and Stuttgart. In 1831 he went to Paris, which remained his headquarters for the rest of his life. Paris was at that time the home of many Polish refugees, and the troubles of Poland procured sympathy for anyone of that race. Chopin soon made friends among the artistic celebrities of Paris, and his first concert in 1832 established his reputation as a pianist of the first class. After 1835, however, he played little in public, and preferred to be known as a composer rather than as an executant. His works were by no means universally popular at first. Schumann greeted him in a famous article published in the

"Allgemeine Musikzeitung" in 1831 with the often quoted words, "Hats off, gentlemen! a genius!" but many other critics—Moscheles for one—disapproved of his strange harmonies and abrupt modulations, while Field, in a moment of vinous irritation, dismissed him as "un talent de chambre de malade." It is curious, by the way, that so little artistic sympathy should have existed between Field and Chopin, since the younger man undoubtedly owed much to the older, whose nocturnes those of Chopin often strikingly recall, while in the mere matter of technique Chopin appears to have followed pretty closely in Field's steps. Liszt, who was then at the zenith of his fame, thought very highly of Chopin's music and was largely instrumental in helping him to the position which he soon reached. After Chopin's death he wrote what we should now call an "appreciation," highly coloured in style and enthusiastic in tone, of the man and his works. Liszt is further said to have been responsible for the introduction of Chopin to George Sand. This took place in 1837, and was the beginning of a *liaison* which lasted for ten years.

Chopin's connection with George Sand has been variously judged. As a rule Chopin's biographers take the line of representing George Sand as a malignant siren, who inveigled trustful and innocent youths into her clutches, sucked their life-blood and cast them aside. It is undoubtedly true that George Sand did have a series of *liaisons*

with men considerably younger than herself, and that after these *liaisons* were over she not infrequently made them the subjects of novels, in which she justified her own conduct at the expense of that of her associate. This in itself is rather a cold-blooded thing to do, but it does not by any means prove that George Sand was the monster that Chopin's friends have tried to make her out. On the contrary, everything goes to prove that while the *liaisons* lasted she behaved admirably. There was a strong motherly instinct in George Sand, and her attitude towards her lovers was often curiously maternal. She seems to have been attracted by weakness and frailty, and to have assumed the duties of sick-nurse with perfect complacency. Undoubtedly she behaved extremely well to that particularly trustful and innocent youth Alfred de Musset, whom, in spite of the most outrageous conduct on his part, she nursed through a dangerous illness at Venice.

In Chopin's case, so far from hurrying her angelic victim (as he is usually represented) into an early grave, she probably did much to prolong his life by the care and tenderness that she lavished upon him. When she first met Chopin he was already consumptive and hypochondriacal—he had been to London earlier in the same year in order to consult a famous doctor. One of her first thoughts was to take him to a warm climate, and at what must have been enormous personal inconvenience she packed up her whole household and carried

him off, with her two children and a maid, to Majorca. Her delightful letters written thence to an intimate friend make it plain how much worry and trouble, all borne without a murmur, Chopin's ill-health and nervousness gave her. The Majorca trip was certainly not a success, but it is obviously unfair to blame her if Chopin did not materially benefit by the change. Throughout the remainder of their *liaison*, she watched over him with all a mother's care, in spite of the fact that he was a most troublesome patient, as everyone who knew him bore witness. With regard to Chopin, too, one may say without cynicism that if it had not been George Sand it would have been someone else, for he was of a notoriously amorous temperament, and long before he met George Sand was always fancying himself in love with someone or other.

As to her influence upon Chopin's genius, it is impossible not to believe that close intercourse with this extraordinarily gifted woman was not infinitely more beneficial to Chopin's intellectual development than the insipid adulation of the empty-headed *grandes dames* from whom she rescued him. Instead of the unhealthy atmosphere of Parisian salons she gave him the cool tranquillity of her garden at Nohant, where he associated on equal terms with the greatest talents of his day. It is not to Chopin's credit that Nohant charmed him but little. He looked upon it as a prison and, if we may judge from his correspondence, he was always sighing for Paris and its delights, for

the worship of his beloved countesses and the delicate ministrations of his tailor. Yet he could appreciate the greatness of George Sand, and even after their final separation he spoke of her with affection and respect. Without being herself a musician she inspired the finest flights of his genius. He wrote his greatest works while under her influence, and, in a word, his connection with her was to him a liberal education.

After his rupture with George Sand, Chopin soon faded and sank. During the last two years of his life he passed many months in England, a country which he detested, saying of its inhabitants that they had not so much intelligence as cows, perhaps because they did not throng his recitals as he could have wished. Chopin was at that time in enfeebled health, having usually to be carried upstairs from his carriage, and his playing was naturally but a shadow of what it had been. He returned to Paris early in 1849 and died in the following October. During his lifetime a halo of romance hung over Chopin's head. His Polish extraction — Poles at that time were the ideal heroes of all well-brought-up schoolgirls—his bodily frailty, together with the necessary touch of impropriety given by his *liaison* with the most famous of living women-writers, all combined to make him the idol of London and Parisian drawing-rooms. The generation that knew him has passed away, but his music, even without the charm of his personal fascination, is as popular as ever. Great

it can hardly be called, save in the sense that Jane Austen is great, in the perfect adaptation of means to end. No one has ever understood the piano, its possibilities and its limitations as Chopin did. His music speaks the last word of pure pianism, as opposed to the modern treatment of the instrument as a strepitous substitute for the orchestra. When we come to consider the fundamental brain-work of Chopin's music, great is certainly the last word that can be applied to it. All the charm and frailty, the passion, the fervour and the disease of Chopin's own personality are here displayed as in a picture. Never was a man's work more plainly a presentment of himself. Not one of the traits of Chopin's character, that impressed his contemporaries is absent from his music. The burning patriotism, which was one of the profoundest emotions of his being, is, as it were, the foundation of his music. The rhythms of his country's songs and dances are the groundwork upon which he embroidered his delicate and aërial fancies. Then, again, how the passionate ardour of his nature surges through his music. It is the highly wrought, almost febrile, emotion of a weak rather than a strong man; even when it is most powerful it is essentially feminine in quality, verging at times upon hysteria. Chopin's music, too, with its daintily laborious experiments in harmony and the curious research of its modulations, calls up in life-like fashion the strained refinement of his manner, the too sensitive delicacy

of his habits, his elegant taste in dress, his partiality for sweet scents and flavours, and his ultra-aristocratic pose. Nothing is more distinctive of his music than his avoidance of the merest semblance of commonplace. He devoted the most fastidious care to the elimination of anything like vulgarity of harmony or melody. In his music we breathe a rarefied air, too fine almost for ordinary mortals, too remote from the common interests and feelings of general life. The thought is made flaccid and etiolated by too assiduous refinement of expression. Frankly one longs for the open air, not to spy upon the world through the rose-tinted curtains of a boudoir. Over all Chopin's music lies the deadly trail of disease. His life was not a healthy one and his music gleams with the fatal iridescence of decay. In its most generous emotions there is a kind of hectic rapture, in its melancholy there is the note of the puling invalid. Yet for all its weaknesses Chopin's music has a strange and individual charm, that charm which the man himself plainly exercised upon those who knew him best. If we ask in vain from him for the serene nobility of the great masters, we get instead a feverish splendour of inspiration touched by a profound and searching melancholy, which perhaps together give as complete a musical equivalent as can be imagined for that vague indescribable *Weltschmerz* which, we are continually assured, is the prevailing emotion of our decadent age.

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If a given number of middle-aged amateurs were questioned as to who was the greatest musician of their time there would probably be almost as many opinions as men, but as to who was the most brilliant and charming hardly any doubt is conceivable. The name of Franz Liszt illuminates the greater part of the nineteenth century with a radiance that throws all lesser luminaries into the shade. In him a marvellous endowment joined with nobility and sweetness of temperament to form a personality of singular fascination. Liszt the pianist is already a matter of history, Liszt the composer is still a subject for debate, but Liszt the man is a living force of sovereign power. What the history of music in the nineteenth century would have been if Liszt had never existed it is difficult to say—probably something very different from what it is.

To take but one instance, the career of Wagner, without Liszt's ever watchful care and constant friendship, might have ended in irretrievable disaster, and apart from his position as foster-parent to all that was best in contemporary music, the personal influence that he exerted upon generation after generation of pupils can hardly be estimated too highly in the history of musical development. But if we leave the sphere of Liszt's influence and turn to the story of his own private achievement it is not possible to take so exalted a tone. Liszt set his mark unmistakably upon piano music, founding in fact an entirely new school of technique, and one which has had an

enormous influence upon all piano literature since his day, but his compositions of other kinds have now little but an historical interest. His career can be divided into two sharply defined periods. The first—that of a virtuoso—lasted from his début in 1823 to 1849 when he forswore the career of a mere executant, the second lasted from his establishing himself in Weimar in 1849 until his death in 1886, and was devoted to conducting, composition and teaching. During the first period he was the darling of Europe, passing from country to country in a continual blaze of triumph, fêted and caressed like no other pianist before or since. During the second, whether at Weimar, Pest or Rome, he was the guide, philosopher and friend of the rising generation of musicians, and fought their battles with as much ardour as if they were his own. At Weimar he devoted himself largely to producing works which were in advance of popular taste, such as Cornelius's "Barber of Bagdad," which raised such a storm of opposition that Liszt was forced to resign his position as conductor of the Court Theatre, though he afterwards returned and made Weimar the home of his declining years.

His own compositions were judged by his contemporaries to be at least as much in advance of their time as those of the young composers whom he befriended, but the years have passed by without bringing them nearer to popularity, and they now seem strangely old-fashioned and unsatisfactory. As a composer of oratorios and orchestral

music Liszt must be content with an honourable if secondary, place in the history of music. Time has justified the forms which he evolved or selected, but the sheer musical value of his work is not strong enough for vitality. His "St Elisabeth" and "Christus" are hardly more than melancholy monuments of misdirected effort, but his symphonic poems mark an exceedingly interesting stage in the history of orchestral music. He owed much to Berlioz and something to Wagner—Wagner, also, it should be observed, did not hesitate to borrow from Liszt—but his own originality is unquestionable. He borrowed the idea of the symphonic poem from Berlioz, but while Berlioz for the most part was purely pictorial Liszt went deeper and made music the expression of psychological development. He is thus artistically the father of Strauss and the modern school of orchestral writers —no mean position for any man to hold, even if he had no further claims upon the attention of posterity. It would serve no useful purpose to descant upon Liszt's symphonic poems in detail. Some are more successful than others, notably "Les Préludes" and "Orpheus," and many of them can still be heard with interest and pleasure; but it is idle to pretend that they have a future. Students of music note with admiration the fine orchestration, the able use of leading motives and the poetical effects gained by clever modification of themes; but their appeal to the general public, never potent, is now practically a thing of the past, and

if Liszt is to live as an orchestral writer, it will be by his brilliant Hungarian rhapsodies, adapted from their original form as piano pieces, in which he made such splendid use of the noble tunes of his fatherland. Liszt was emphatically a pioneer. In that capacity he is an important figure in the history of nineteenth century music. He was the first to tread paths which since his day have become the beaten tracks of music. To him belongs the honour of planting the seed which in a later day has bloomed with so splendid a luxuriance. But if in regard to orchestral music Liszt's position is principally that of an explorer, in the realm of pianoforte music he accomplished something very like a revolution by dint of his own personal genius. Partly by his own technical accomplishment, partly by his treatment of the instrument in his own pianoforte works, he transformed the hitherto accepted view of the pianoforte altogether. That the revolution effected by Liszt in the technique of the pianoforte tended altogether to desirable ends can hardly be maintained. In his hands the pianoforte unquestionably lost much of its special character, assuming instead the function as it were of an interpreter of the orchestra. But Liszt widened the horizon of pianoforte technique in so imperial a fashion as to compel admiration even from those who are most opposed in theory to his methods of procedure. Perhaps the most characteristic part of his work—apart from his splendidly vigorous and passionate

Hungarian rhapsodies, to which allusion has already been made—lies in his almost numberless transcriptions for the pianoforte. Transcriptions cannot of course rank very high in the world of art, but there is no doubt that Liszt made of them something very different from what had hitherto been known in the world of the pianoforte. He had an extraordinary genius for reproducing orchestral feeling and orchestral effects on the piano, and his transcriptions of classical works, if they did nothing else, familiarised many people with music of a kind that in those days was but little known, while his arrangements of Wagner unquestionably did an immense amount towards spreading the fame of that then neglected composer. Liszt's original works for the pianoforte suffer from the same defects as his symphonic poems. They mark an epoch in the history of pianoforte technique, but their sheer musical value is too slight to save them from oblivion. At present they hold the field as the last word in what may be called pianoforte rhetoric, but the advent of a new discoverer in yet unsuspected regions of transcendent technique must inevitably sign their death-warrant.

Chopin and Liszt are the high-priests of modern pianoforte music. The influence of both has been enormous and widely different in result. It would in fact be impossible to find two men with natures more diverse, or whose attitude towards art differed more completely—Liszt, with his wide sympathies,

his breadth of vision, his pioneering genius, his ceaseless struggle to enlarge the boundaries of music—Chopin, self-centred, shy, retiring, morbid, ultra-refined and egotistical, occupying, as it were, but a corner of the field of art, but making that corner entirely his own. In summing up each man's work there can be little doubt as to which will ultimately prove the more valuable. Chopin might truly have said of himself, "Mon verre n'est pas grand, mais je bois dans mon verre," whereas Liszt sipped at many glasses and drained none. The glamour of Liszt's splendid and delightful personality, however it may have charmed his contemporaries, will fade into the mists of oblivion, while the voice of Chopin, thin but clear, will continue to sing through the ages.

WAGNER

CHAPTER XV

WAGNER

HE is a bold man who at this time of day takes up his pen to write anything about Wagner. What indeed, he may well say, looking at the closely-packed catalogue of books dealing with Wagner and his works in the library of the British Museum, can now be said on the subject that has not already been said over and over again? It is true that Wagner is the most written-about personage of the nineteenth century, but there is this excuse for returning to him that, though we are as yet too near him in point of time to pretend to anything like finality of judgment, every generation, every decade, almost every year that passes gives us a better chance of obtaining something like a just estimate of his genius. These pages will very likely have crumbled into dust before the world has made up its mind as to the precise niche in fame's temple that Wagner is destined to occupy; but already some approach towards a fairer appraisement of his genius can be made than was possible when his music was merely an excuse for quarrels and bickerings, often personal and always virulent, in which questions of race and religion sometimes took as important a place as those of art.

The early days of the Wagner controversy seem to us now like the battles of a horde of pigmies fighting, as did Cadmus's warriors, for they know not what. Wagner's enemies condemned him for crimes which seem to us illusory; his admirers praised him for virtues which we cannot recognise. In the seventies the parrot-cry of the anti-Wagnerians was the ugliness of Wagner's music. "Tristan" to them was "the climax of cacophony," "Die Meistersinger" "a monstrous caterwauling." The Wagnerians of that date seem to us scarcely less absurd. To some of them Wagner's greatness lay in his philosophy. He was the Schopenhauer of music, and his works were acclaimed as an artistic expression of the system of the sage of Frankfort. Others again found salvation in his music as being an allegorical expression of burning questions of the day—the struggle between capital and labour, and the ultimate triumph of socialism. It would be an unprofitable task even to catalogue, much more to discuss, the pros and cons of the Wagnerian controversy, or to exhume the arguments, already mouldering in their graves, of his hundred and one enemies and adherents. A glance at his career will help us far more to appreciate the work that he did. It is noticeable that Wagner was by no means one of those youthful prodigies who lisped in music like Mozart. His first tendency was far rather towards the drama, as befitted the son[1] of

[1] It is now a generally accepted fact that Wagner was actually the son of Geyer the actor, who married Frau Wagner shortly after the death of her first husband. See "Overtones," by James Huneker, p. 64.

an actor and the brother of actors and actresses, and his earliest effusions have nothing to do with music. According to his account it was his introduction to Beethoven's symphonies, which he heard in Leipzig at the age of seventeen, that first stirred the pulse of music in his being. To these, in his own words, he devoted himself "with passionate enthusiasm, though entirely without any special musical study." They gave to music in his eyes "an altogether supernatural power," which he could not measure by any ordinary outward standard. "Their harmonies and movements,"[1] he says, "appeared to me rather like ghostly, spiritual forces, which seemed to address themselves to me individually, and to put on the most fantastic shapes! The knowledge taught me as pedantically and drily as possible at school was, of course, of no avail against a power of such strange fascination. I had suddenly become a musician, though at the same time my instinct of poetic imitation, which I had even as a child practised on Shakespeare and the antique tragedians, did not quite leave me. It sought rather to pay a tribute, however small, in the shape of some librettos which I composed, to the mighty Dæmon of music that had so taken possession of me." Launched in this way upon the career of a musician, Wagner soon began to produce works of his own, studying meanwhile first with a master named Gottlieb Müller and afterwards with Theodor Weinlig. Sundry over-

[1] "The Work and Mission of my Life," 1879.

tures dating from this early period have survived and have recently been performed in London. Their musical value is small, but they are interesting as showing the trend of Wagner's thought. In 1830 revolution was in the air. Leipzig rang with the echoes of the Paris Revolution of July, and the Polish insurrection nearer at hand stirred the blood of young Germany. Wagner has told us himself how deeply he was impressed by the sight of Polish emigrants in the streets of Leipzig, "haughty handsome men, who filled me with the deepest sympathy for the sad fate of their country. . . . I became acquainted with numbers of them." That sympathy found a voice in the "Polonia" overture, a voice weak as yet and halting in utterance, but still speaking with no uncertain sound. The "Columbus" overture which followed showed the young composer embarking upon new oceans of discovery, and in the symphony in C he showed how solid was the technical foundation of his science. But the maturing of Wagner's genius was a work of time. His nature was singularly plastic, and he bent in turn to many and various influences. In "Die Feen" (1833) he clung to the skirts of Weber; "Das Liebesverbot" (1836) is a frank imitation of Auber and Bellini; in "Rienzi" (1838) there is more than a suggestion of Meyerbeer, though here, for the first time, some of the salient characteristics of Wagner's own individuality began to appear. In "Der fliegende Holländer," though its debts to Marschner's "Hans Heiling"

are considerable, Wagner found himself at last. The first suggestion of this work came to the composer during a stormy voyage from Riga, where he had been conductor at the theatre for two years, to London, a stage on the way to Paris. The words and music were written in the darkest and dreariest period of Wagner's life, while he was battling with penury in the back streets of Paris. Traces of the old Italian influence still hang about "Der fliegende Holländer," but the romantic atmosphere of the story led Wagner almost unconsciously upon new paths. Much of the work sounds conventional enough by the side of Wagner's later works, but as a whole it marks the beginning of a new era in the history of opera. The sea inspired it, and the music of the sea sounds in its noblest pages. The characterisation shows an intellectual subtlety very different from anything in the composer's previous work. In a more technical sense, too, "Der fliegende Holländer" marks the opening of a new period in Wagner's musical history. The *Leit-Motiv*, which was afterwards to become so salient a feature of his music, here makes its first appearance, used tentatively, it is true, and without a suggestion of the elaboration with which Wagner afterwards employed it, but often with true poetical significance and with masterly dramatic effect.

In many ways Wagner's Paris period was an eventful epoch in his career. It was here that he first read the legends of Tannhäuser and Lohengrin, and under their influence conceived the idea that

became the mainspring of his life's work, the foundation of a truly national German art-form. In his own words: "A new world opened before me. Here was the ideal form suddenly offered to me in all its glory—that form which in the world about me, however brilliant and great it seemed, could have so little part in the productions of that popular and only school of art which I saw prevailed both in the drama and in music. Here were suddenly revealed in their true artistic form the noblest, most characteristic, deepest and strongest elements of the primal Germanic spirit." A summons to Dresden, where his "Rienzi" was accepted for production, chimed in well with Wagner's mood, and bearing with him the completed "Fliegende Holländer" and the schemes of "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin," he crossed the Rhine and found himself once more on German soil, where alone he felt able to carry out the great task to which he had now devoted his intellect and energy.

Dresden still prided itself upon the traditions of Weber, but the public there, though at least as much cultivated as that of any other German city, had but little sympathy with the aspirations of the new Kapellmeister. "Rienzi" was received with favour, but "Der fliegende Holländer" found few admirers, and "Tannhäuser," at any rate at first, still fewer. Even so brilliant and gifted a musician as Frau Schroeder-Devrient, the original Venus in "Tannhäuser," said to the composer after the first performance: "You are a genius, of course, but you

do write the maddest stuff." Even thus early in his career Wagner stood utterly alone. No one understood him; no one sympathised with him. Yet his courage was undaunted, and he pressed forward upon the path that he had planned for himself, of building up a new and essentially German form of opera. "Lohengrin" was written in these days, and sketches made for a partly satirical, partly autobiographical drama—which afterwards became "Die Meistersinger"—in which the deaf adders who stopped their ears to the new music were lashed with scathing irony. Then came the wave of revolution which swept Europe in 1848 and 1849. Wagner was too good a republican not to be affected by it, and he paid the price of his share in the Dresden rising by a twelve years' exile.

Wagner's actual share in the rising has been much exaggerated. He viewed it primarily from the standpoint of a theorist. He saw that the art of his day was the outcome of the reactionary civilisation in which his lot was cast, and he hoped to see an artistic and social revolution simultaneously accomplished. He has put his own views into admirably lucid words: "In my belief, it was only by a complete change in political and social relations, of which the degradation of art was a fitting manifestation, that an artistic revival, and especially a revival of the drama, was to be brought about. In civilisation, as it then existed, the stage only played the part of a pleasant source of enliven-

ment for social *ennui*; yet even thus it seemed to me that if it were once under elevated and artistic guidance, it might have an elevating influence on a public, which by its means might be gradually led away from all that was evil, commonplace, frivolous and false. To prove that this was possible now became my task, as the possibility of a genuine change in the constitution of society suddenly seemed revealed to me. As an artist, I felt myself impelled to represent, in this new aspect of affairs, the so easily forgotten or neglected rights of art. That my plan of reform, already thought out to the smallest practical detail, would only be received in scornful silence by the existing government of art-matters was of course evident to me. I turned, therefore, to the new movement that was so full of promise for my scheme."

Removed from the whirlpool of active musical life, living for the most part quietly in Switzerland, Wagner had ample leisure for maturing the vast ideas which already peopled his imagination. Remote as seemed the chance of his winning the ear of Germany, he never faltered in his determination. In his book "Kunst und Revolution" his theories upon art are crystallised into literary form; in the mighty drama "Der Ring des Nibelungen," on which he was now launched, they took practical shape. How far theory influenced practice and practice vitalised theory it is not easy to say, but the result marks what is unquestionably one of the most far-reaching revolutions in the

history of opera. It was Wagner's aim to unite music, drama and painting in one art-form, in which each should contribute equally to the general effect. In theory he took his stand upon the Athenian drama of Periclean days, though it need hardly be said that the result was as different from its model as was the opera of Peri, which also announced itself an attempt to reconstruct the conditions of Greek tragedy. Revolting against the conventionalised expression of emotion which he saw upon the contemporary stage, he turned to the early myths as the simplest and most natural expression of human feelings and sympathies, and in the noble German legend of the Nibelungs he found the field he desired for the practical exposition of his developed theory of art.

The poem of "Der Ring des Nibelungen" was, so to speak, written backwards. Wagner began with the tragedy of Siegfried's death, and then, finding it necessary to add more and more preludial and explanatory scenes, gradually developed the whole series of dramas as we now have them. Thus "Das Rheingold," though musically the immediate successor of "Lohengrin," is a maturer example of Wagner's view of dramatic poetry than "Götterdämmerung," which indeed in many details has suggestions of Wagner's earlier period. It is easy to see, for instance, that the second act was originally planned in view of a big concerted piece, something after the "Lohengrin" pattern, though the music seems to belong to an utterly different

world of expression. By the time he came to write the poem of "Das Rheingold" Wagner had entirely emancipated himself from the traditions of the past, and the gulf that separates "Lohengrin" from "Das Rheingold" is therefore almost wider as regards the poetical foundation of the drama than as regards the music. "Das Rheingold" has, in fact, that mark of crudity which is almost inseparable from an inexperienced use of new material. No one is so bitter a controversialist as your new-won proselyte, and Wagner, freshly emancipated from the bondage of old convention, was defiant in his disdain of what had been regarded as the essential factors of opera. The older opera had been purely lyrical in fabric—the lifting of speech into song under stress of emotion, the orchestra being used for the most part merely as a discreet accompaniment. The backbone of Wagner's system was the equalising of his vocal and instrumental forces. The formal song of the older opera was reduced to a free declamation, while the orchestral accompaniment was raised to symphonic dignity. An inevitable concomitant of the latter was the creation of the system of "leading-motives." It is impossible to write symphonic music without themes. Wagner took his themes not from the words spoken by his characters, as the older masters did, but from the characters themselves, their feelings, passions, and aspirations. In his earlier works Wagner had used leading-motives with ever-increasing richness of resource, but still for the most part his orchestra was chiefly an accompaniment. In "Das Rhein-

gold" we find for the first time the leading-motive as the pivot of the drama. The persons of the drama, even such "properties" as rings and swords, to say nothing of abstract emotions such as jealousy, fear, pride and so forth, all have their representative themes, subject fully as much as the characters and sentiments that they represent to organic change and development. Combined and contrasted with infinite art and science, worked up into a fabric of extraordinary complexity and elaboration, they furnish as it were the substructure upon which the drama is built. In "Das Rheingold," as is only natural, the vast engine of musical expression which Wagner had practically invented is used with less convincing mastery of resource than in the later dramas. Some of the leading-motives are merely labels, which crop up in the orchestra whenever their subject is mentioned, without much regard to dramatic or musical continuity. At the mention of a sword, for instance, a trumpet plays the motive afterwards associated with Siegmund's sword; if Freia is referred to, you have the Freia motive in the orchestra, and so on. But this was a kind of musical trickery from which Wagner soon emancipated himself. He found that his theory, like most other theories, had to be modified a good deal in practice, not only with respect to leading-motives, but in other details also. For instance, when he set out to weld drama and music into one, he seems to have determined that because in drama two characters do not speak at the same time, they

should not sing together in opera, and in the love-duet in "Die Walküre" he carefully abjured the delicious harmony of two voices. Fortunately, by the time he came to write "Tristan und Isolde" he thought better of his theory, to the great advantage of the marvellous love-scene in the second act.

But throughout his later works we find a gradual tendency towards lyrical expression, which is to some extent a negation of the theory with which he started upon the composition of "Der Ring des Nibelungen." He seems to have felt this himself, and it is interesting to read in this connection his own words with regard to "Tristan":—"I readily submit this work to the severest test based on my theoretical principles. Not that I constructed it after a system—for I entirely forgot all theory—but because I here moved with entire freedom, independent of all theoretical misgivings, so that even whilst I was writing I became conscious how I had gone far beyond my system." These words are exceedingly interesting as a practical confession of what indeed is a self-evident proposition, namely that Wagner's creative instinct gave the lie to his theoretical system. His theory crystallised his feelings of revolt against conventional opera. The opera of his day cried aloud for reform, and as a destructive principle Wagner's theory of the union of drama and symphony worked admirably. But as a foundation for creative work it was insufficient, for the simple reason that the essence of opera is not dramatic but lyrical, as Wagner found in prac-

tice. "Tristan" is not valuable to us as a union of drama and symphony, but as a supreme expression of lyrical feeling. It is indeed one of the most perfect conceivable examples of what an opera should be, since it is almost devoid of incident and deals entirely with emotion. This is the true province of music, which strictly speaking has nothing to do with incident. It cannot heighten the dramatic effect of a "situation"; it is merely a drag upon action, whereas its power of expressing emotion is unlimited. "Tristan" was written while Wagner was midway with his great Nibelung drama. In his Swiss retreat, far from friends and possible patrons, he seems to have despaired of ever seeing the production of a work that demanded such exceptional conditions, and turned to "Tristan" in the hope of producing something better adapted to the ordinary stage. Yet even "Tristan" might never have seen the light but for the fortunate accident which threw the poem of "Der Ring" into the hands of the young king Ludwig II. of Bavaria. The latter ascended the throne in 1864, and one of his first acts was to summon Wagner to finish his great work at Munich. With what joy the composer obeyed the call can well be imagined. Meanwhile "Tristan," which had been cast aside as unplayable after fifty-seven rehearsals at Vienna four years before, was produced at Munich in 1865, followed by "Die Meistersinger" in 1868. "Das Rheingold" and "Die Walküre" were produced at Munich respectively

in 1869 and 1870, and the whole Nibelung drama was given for the first time in 1876 at the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth, the foundation stone of which had been laid in 1872. In 1882 came "Parsifal," and Wagner died in 1883.

It is interesting to compare Wagner's present position in the world of music with that which he held twenty years ago. The prophecies that were spoken over his deathbed by friends and foes have alike proved singularly misleading. The latter proclaimed that the Wagner bubble was on the point of bursting, the former that Wagner's works would sweep all other music from the field. Neither prophecy has proved correct. Wagner's popularity has steadily increased from that day to this; even chauvinistic Paris has at last yielded to his sway. Nevertheless, statistics show that "Lohengrin" and "Tannhäuser" are still far more popular than "Tristan" and "Die Meistersinger," to say nothing of "The Ring." "Parsifal" stands apart from the rest, being still (except for sacrilegious New York) performed only at Bayreuth. On the other hand, Wagner is so far from having swept away his predecessors that there has been of late a remarkable revival of interest in the early works of Verdi and the despised Italian school, which twenty years ago seemed doomed to speedy extinction. As to Wagner's own dreams of founding a new German school, they have proved the most baseless of any. If the past twenty years have proved one thing

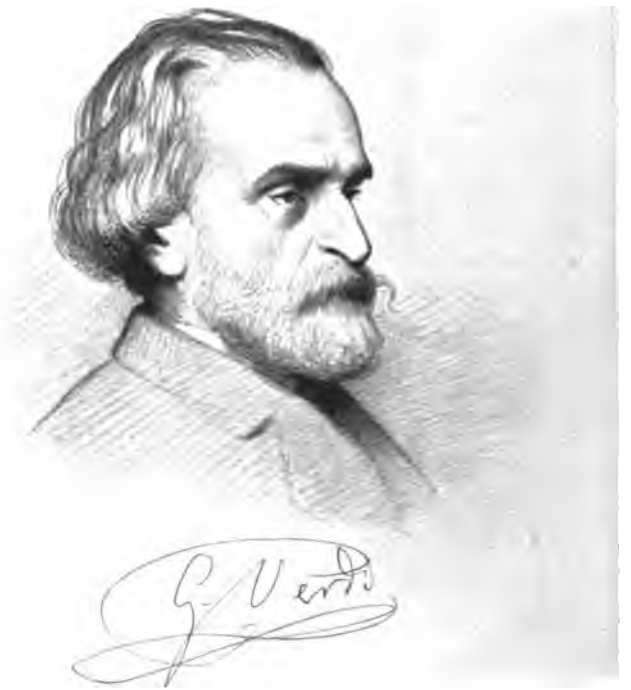
more conclusively than another, it is that the bow of Ulysses has still to be strung. That a composer will arise who will be capable of carrying on the Wagner tradition may still be a pious aspiration of the faithful, but it is as far from realisation as ever, and indeed it becomes more probable every day that Wagner's fate is to stand like a mighty monument at the end of a blind avenue, magnificent in solitary splendour but leading nowhere. Even now the main stream of musical activity in Germany is leaving opera and turning in the direction of symphonic music. Such attempts as there have been—and they have been many—to write music in the Wagnerian manner have been singularly unproductive. Since the death of Wagner, with the exception of Humperdinck's solitary success "Hänsel und Gretel," the only contributions to the international repertory of opera have been made by Italy, who has gone on her way rejoicing, hardly touched by Wagnerian influence. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that Wagner was great not because of his theories, but in spite of them, and this, I fancy, is what after ages will endorse. His idea of founding a new German art upon the simple beauty and humanity of the old myths sounds a noble aspiration enough, and his incomparable genius infused life and interest even into the feeble and ineffectual deities of the Teutonic Valhalla; but the hopelessness of the dream is sufficiently proved by the efforts of those who have endeavoured to follow in his footsteps. The same

is true of his elaborate system of leading-motives, which, when untouched by the fire of his genius, has degenerated into being merely a clever arrangement of labels. Yet if Wagner, like most of the great revolutionaries, has to be content to see his vast schemes of reform expire with himself, he has indirectly conferred untold benefits upon the musical world. The history of opera is really nothing but a series of pendulum-swings between the extremes of dramatic and lyrical expression. Peri and his friends started with purely dramatic ideals, which ended in the hands of the successors of Handel in a mere carnival of lyricism, in which all dramatic truth was entirely lost sight of. Gluck restored the balance, and from his time to that of Wagner the trend of opera was again towards lyrical expression, finding its climax in the works of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti. Wagner acted the part of Gluck over again, and if his attempt to right the balance between drama and song does not prove to have been accomplished in exactly the way that he designed, it was nevertheless a sufficiently remarkable feat that he accomplished it at all.

His idea of welding drama and opera into one harmonious whole was doomed from the outset by the simple fact that the two are perfectly distinct art-forms, each with its own peculiar set of conventions, which are entirely independent of each other. Had he carried out his theory to the letter he might or might not have reformed the opera of his day, but he certainly would have left no masterworks of

music to delight future generations. Fortunately his artistic instinct was stronger than his devotion to theory, and he wrote "Tristan," which is practically one mighty flood of purely lyrical expression from beginning to end. Gluck did the same in "Armide," a work in which the essential lyricism of the subject seems to set at defiance the theories so carefully stated in the preface to "Alceste," which when strictly followed in that and others of the composer's works produced merely a dull drama set to music, not an opera at all. But Wagner had at his command a means of lyrical expression of which Gluck knew practically nothing, in the shape of the symphonic orchestra, and it is far and away his greatest achievement that he pressed this into the service of opera. His use of the orchestra as a means of lyrical expression, scarcely less important than the human voice itself, is the one really important legacy that Wagner has left to the world. We have only to look at a modern opera, let us say Puccini's "Madama Butterfly," to see how little Wagner's theories of music-drama are likely to affect the future of music. His own works stand as magnificent monuments of creative genius, perhaps the greatest that the nineteenth century has to show, but even now—little more than twenty years after his death—in how small a degree do they influence the operatic industry of the day. A superficial observer might be pardoned for saying that Italian opera—and at the present moment Italy is the only country in which opera is a living

force—would be precisely what it is if Wagner had never existed. This is not so, as I have ventured to point out; but Wagner's influence is exercised in a way very different from what he himself designed, and from what his followers predicted twenty years ago. In this point, as in many others, musical history repeats itself with curious persistence, but fortunately Wagner does not stand or fall by virtue of his influence upon the subsequent development of music. His own achievement, so sublime in conception, so masterly in execution, is a legacy that the world will not willingly let die. It is not as a theorist nor as a philosopher that Wagner will live, but as a musician and as an enchanter whose power over the springs of feeling has rarely been equalled in the history of musical art.



Genova
6 Febbraio
1882

VERDI

CHAPTER XVI

VERDI

SEVERAL times in the history of music has it happened that two great men have stood side by side, summing up the art of their time in their own personalities, whatever minor differences there may have been in their methods of procedure. It was so in the case of Handel and Bach, and again later in the case of Mozart and Haydn. Somewhat similar was the case of Wagner and Verdi, who worked side by side, as it were, through the greater part of the nineteenth century. Different as were the talents of the two, they had many points in common. Both worked almost exclusively for the stage, and the genius of both developed in so surprising and almost unexampled a manner, that it is difficult to say whether a wider gulf lies between the earliest and latest works of the one or of the other. But in character the men were worlds asunder. Wagner was essentially a theorist, building his musical system upon certain definite literary conceptions to which he strove to give practical expression. Verdi, on the other hand, was an artist pure and simple, obeying an inner impulse which he would probably have found it difficult if not impossible to explain in words. While Wagner

was overturning systems and exploring untrodden paths, Verdi was content to work with materials ready to hand, developing traditional forms to their highest attainable point of beauty and efficiency. Wagner's influence upon his contemporaries was immeasurably greater than that of Verdi, but whether the actual musical legacy that he bequeathed to the world will be more highly valued by posterity is another and a very different question.

Verdi's decisive appearance in the musical world of Italy came at a propitious moment. In 1839, when his first opera saw the light, Rossini had been silent for ten years, Bellini was dead, and of the great trinity that had ruled the destinies of Italian opera for so long only Donizetti was still active. The time was ripe for fresh influences, and Verdi's appearance in the musical arena was destined speedily to inaugurate a new era in the history of Italian opera. Verdi was born in 1813 of humble parents in the neighbourhood of Busseto not far from Parma. His boyhood and youth were passed in poverty and obscurity, but his talent for music made him friends in Busseto, and though strangely enough he was rejected by the pundits of the Milan Conservatoire when he applied for admission, he received what was probably a far more practical musical education from Lavigna, the *maestro al cembalo* at La Scala. Verdi's first work, "Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio," revealed unmistakably those qualities which were destined

speedily to lift him to the front rank of operatic composers. It abounds in fine melodies, and the dramatic incidents are handled with that instinctive knowledge of effect which was always one of Verdi's principal characteristics. "Oberto" was followed by a comic opera known alternatively as "Il Finto Stanislao" and "Un Giorno di Regno," which was written in mournful circumstances, the composer having recently lost his wife and his two children. Not unnaturally it failed completely, but in "Nabucodonosor" he scored a triumph which echoed far beyond the frontiers of Italy. "I Lombardi alla prima Crociata" still further advanced the composer's reputation, and with "Ernani," which was produced in 1844, Verdi found himself, while still in his thirty-first year, the most popular composer in Italy. It is not difficult, even for those who are least in sympathy with the style of Verdi's early operas, to trace the causes of his instantaneous success. Upon ears accustomed to the long-drawn sentimentality of Bellini and the conventional airs and graces of Donizetti, the manly vigour and directness of Verdi must have struck with irresistible effect. Much of the music that he wrote at this period of his career is open to the charge of vulgarity, but its spirit and energy are undeniable. Not seldom, too, there are traces of a power of character-drawing, afterwards developed in "Otello" and "Falstaff" in a manner unprecedented since the days of Mozart, which must have seemed a new thing indeed to those whose musical experience was bounded by

Bellini and Donizetti. It must be borne in mind, too, that the political situation counted for something in the tale of Verdi's triumph. The Lombard population, writhing beneath the iron heel of Austria, greeted with rapture a musician who gave voice to their passionate yearning for liberty. It was not till some years later that the Milanese discovered that the letters of Verdi's name stood for "Vittorio Emanuele Re d'Italia," but from the first they hailed the new composer as the Tyrtæus of awakened Italy. The Austrian censorship was wary and skilful, and did its best to eliminate from the librettos of Italian composers any words that could be twisted into a patriotic significance; but sometimes their vigilance slumbered, and it happened that several passages in Verdi's earlier works rang in the hearts of his countrymen in a sense very different from that which their context suggested. The famous chorus in "Nabucodonosor," "O mia patria si bella e perduta," ran like wildfire from lip to lip, and was sung in the streets of Milan with an enthusiasm certainly not begotten by any sympathy for the sufferings of Jewish captives. In a later work a duet, "La patria tradita piangendo c' invita," was the invariable signal for a demonstration upon the part of the audience which as often as not ended in the curtain being lowered, the lights turned out, and the turbulent patriots dismissed into the streets to cool their enthusiasm under the stars. But even such words as these would not have roused Verdi's countrymen without the magic of his music to enforce

their meaning. There was something about the broad sweep of his melodies, his vigorous rhythms and the stirring climaxes of his concerted pieces, that seemed to harmonise with the restless spirit of the times, and gave him and his works a place in the affections of his countrymen which could hardly have been won by a man of less masculine genius or by music of more delicate fibre. After "Ernani," Verdi poured forth a stream of works in response to an irresistible demand of the public, many of which are now forgotten. Probably he wrote in haste and was content to repeat himself to a certain extent. Yet even among the least meritorious of these early operas there is hardly one that does not contain music of sterling value. Of late years there has been a marked revival of interest in Italy in the productions of Verdi's early manhood, and several of them, such as "I Due Foscari," "I Masnadieri," and "Macbeth," have been performed with no little success. Compared to his later works they are crude in method and superficial in treatment, but they are full of magnificent tunes and often the handling of dramatic situations is surprising in its vigour and intensity. "Macbeth" is interesting to Englishmen as being Verdi's first attempt at a Shakespearian theme. The libretto is a poor piece of work, and could never pass muster with an audience that had any respect for Shakespeare; but much of the music is fine, and as a whole the work deserves to rank as the first of Verdi's second period, in which he emerges from the *Sturm und Drang*

of his youth, and shows a more delicate sense of colour and contrast in character-drawing, greater freedom in rhythm and melody, and a wider knowledge of the effects to be drawn from the orchestra. In all these respects "Macbeth" is stronger than its predecessors. The handling of the voices in some of the more dramatic scenes suggests the methods of "Rigoletto" rather than those of "Ernani," and the sleep-walking scene is carefully written, and highly impressive in performance. "Macbeth" was re-written in 1865 for its production in Paris, and the best proof of the advance that Verdi had made since "Ernani" is that the older scenes do not appear at all out of keeping with such wholly new passages as the great battle scene in the last act, which is as vigorous and striking a piece of orchestral music as Verdi ever wrote. The typical work of Verdi's second period is "Rigoletto," an opera which through all changes of fashion has never lost its popularity and unquestionably represents the highest point of his achievement before he reached in "Aida" his third and culminating period. Wide indeed is the gulf that separates "Rigoletto" from "Ernani," though it is one that had been bridged by gradual stages, not leapt, as it were, like the gulf between "Lohengrin" and "Das Rheingold."

The progress of Verdi's musical development was the more gradual, as was natural in the case of a man who worked out his own salvation, so to speak, in terms of music and music alone. Wagner, on the other hand, as we have seen, was a more self-

conscious reformer. His musical development was largely the reflection of his widening views on politics and life, and as such moved by strides that cannot well be compared to the progress of a purely artistic genius. But even in Verdi's case there were influences other than purely musical at work. In some recently published letters of his we find him impressing upon a librettist the necessity of choosing a subject in which the interest lies in variety of character and the clash of conflicting personalities. "My own experience," he writes, "has confirmed me in the ideas that I have always entertained with regard to theatrical effect, although at the outset of my career I had not the courage to act upon them altogether. For instance, ten years ago I should never have risked writing 'Rigoletto.' The truth is, that Italian opera in our day sins by monotony, so much so that I should now refuse to set subjects of the character of 'Nabucco' and 'I Due Foscari.' They present certain interesting situations, but they lack variety. One note runs through all of them; a noble one, if you will, but always the same." Verdi's appreciation of variety in a libretto undoubtedly helped forward the development of his genius. By the time he had reached the "Rigoletto" period his genius had gained in flexibility as much as in command of emotional expression. In the days of "Oberto" he could as little have given us his incomparable picture of the gay, light-hearted Duke, sketched with so easy and deft a grace, as that of the passion-tossed jester,

rushing from heights of wild buffoonery to depths of passion and revenge.

But in the merely technical side of his art Verdi's advance in "Rigoletto" is worth study. The more declamatory scenes, such as the jester's great monologue, are treated with a freedom that might almost be called Wagnerian, except that in those days Verdi cannot possibly have heard any of Wagner's music, if indeed he even knew of his existence; and the Cavatina-Cabaletta tradition—the slow movement followed by the quick—which had been the backbone of Italian opera for so many years is often set entirely at nought, as in Rigoletto's scene with the courtiers, in which the arrangement of the movements must at that day have appeared an unprecedented piece of audacity. In his treatment of the orchestra, too, Verdi was in "Rigoletto" a very different man from the composer of "Oberto." The "big guitar" is not altogether discarded, but in many scenes and especially in the last act, the composer's use of the orchestra adds very much to the general effect, though of course it still gives but a foretaste of what he was to do with it in his latest works.

Soon after "Rigoletto" came "Il Trovatore" and "La Traviata," two works which, though now somewhat out of favour with English audiences, in their time did as much as any of Verdi's operas to carry his fame to distant lands. Neither of them can for a moment be compared to "Rigoletto." "Il Trovatore" has extraordinary energy and

vivacity of expression. Scarcely any work of Verdi's exhibits so triumphantly his amazing fertility of invention, but the plot is the very frenzy of melodrama and the characters are the merest pasteboard. "La Traviata" is of more delicate fibre, and contains passages of charming grace and tenderness, but the story is a sickly piece of sentimentality, and indeed the most curious thing about "La Traviata" is that Verdi, who throughout his career had dealt almost entirely with the robuster passions, should have succeeded as well as he did with Dumas's drawing-room tragedy.

Verdi's pre-eminence among operatic composers was sufficiently acknowledged in 1855 by the invitation to compose a work for the Paris Opera to celebrate the opening of the Universal Exhibition. "Les Vêpres Siciliennes" served its purpose in giving the necessary éclat to the season, but its success was transient, and it was not until the production of "Un Ballo in Maschera" in 1859 that Verdi again did himself complete justice. So far as form is concerned, it cannot be said that "Un Ballo" shows much advance upon "Rigoletto," which in many ways it resembles, but in none of the works of his second period is the flexibility of Verdi's genius more triumphantly displayed. "Un Ballo" abounds in the striking contrasts in which Verdi delighted. Scenes of light-hearted and irresponsible gaiety jostle passages of poignant tragedy. All are treated with equal mastery, and in the scene in which the jealous fury of an injured

husband and the terror and remorse of a guilty wife are combined with the mocking laughter of a band of conspirators, Verdi may justly be said to have surpassed even the dramatic intensity of his famous quartet in "Rigoletto."

Shortly before he wrote "Un Ballo" Verdi had thought of making an opera out of "King Lear," and an interesting correspondence between him and his prospective librettist has recently been published, which conveys a remarkable impression of Verdi's literary culture and knowledge of stage effect. The scheme, unfortunately, came to nothing. The attempt to reduce that tremendous tragedy to the dimensions of an opera libretto was perhaps foredoomed to failure, but it is disappointing, in view of what Verdi subsequently achieved in "Otello," to think of the masterpiece which we might have had in "King Lear." "La Forza del Destino" and "Don Carlos," the only operas which Verdi produced during the sixties, are works of transition, remarkably interesting to the student of his musical development, though neither can be ranked amongst his most successful efforts. His earlier manner was beginning to hang heavily upon his shoulders; in both works there are scenes which adumbrate the greater freedom of form and more symphonic use of the orchestra which are typical of his latest period. "Don Carlos," in spite of the many beauties that it contains, is now practically forgotten, but "La Forza del Destino" still holds the stage in Italy, and if it were not for the melodramatic

extravagance of its libretto there might still be a future for this remarkable work. But all Verdi's previous triumphs were cast into the shade by the production of "Aida," which was written for Ismail Pasha's new opera-house at Cairo, and produced there in 1871. The gradual progress of his development was here hastened by the subject of his new work, so remote from the ordinary operatic groove. The possibilities of Egyptian local colour tempted his genius to fresh experiments, while his command of melody remained as inexhaustible as ever, and his touch in the handling of dramatic situations was strengthened by experience. The novelty and freshness of "Aida" seduced many critics into accusing Verdi of imitating Wagner. There is little in the charge that needs rebutting. Verdi's own development previous to "Aida" proves that there was no need to look for external influences to explain the change in his manner. The human voice was still the centre of his system. The statue was still on the stage and the pedestal in the orchestra. He had gradually learnt the value of the orchestra in giving colour to the dramatic picture, and he had gradually learnt also to rid himself of useless conventions which at first he had employed half unconsciously. The germ of "Aida" was in "Rigoletto." It only needed the fostering influence of time and experience to bring the bud into blossom.

Verdi's next triumph lay in a different field. His "Requiem," written for Manzoni in 1874, won

the admiration of all save a few pedants by the intensity of its feeling, its extraordinary dramatic power and its imaginative splendour. Hans von Bülow and a few ultra-puristical grammarians made merry over what they called its contrapuntal blunders, but it is significant that Brahms, the most learned of Verdi's contemporaries, admired it unreservedly. In England it was at first thought too theatrical in style, but we have at last learnt that "The Messiah" is not necessarily the only touchstone for judging the merits of sacred music, and Verdi's "Requiem" is now universally accepted as the masterpiece that it is.

The history of Verdi's latest years reads almost like a fairy-tale. The "Requiem" once fairly launched upon its successful career he bade a formal farewell to the world of music and retired to his property at Sant' Agata to live the quiet life of a simple country gentleman. He was then some years over sixty, his life had been strenuous and ardent, and he had fairly earned a peaceful evening to his day of toil. Who could suppose that he was on the threshold of triumphs still more dazzling than those already won? The first symptom of renewed activity appeared in the revival in 1881 of "Simon Boccanegra," a failure of twenty years ago, the libretto of which was revised by Arrigo Boito and the music in part rewritten by the composer. The revival was successful, though the new music, much of which was superb in invention and design, harmonised but imperfectly with the old. But the

significance of the incident lay in the association for the first time of Verdi with Boito, one of the most gifted scholars, poets and musicians of his time. How much Boito had to do with the latest phase of Verdi's activity, with that marvellous Indian summer of his genius which is almost without precedent in the history of music, it is difficult accurately to say. It is certain that without Boito's fostering aid we should never have had "Otello" and "Falstaff" in anything like the shape that they now wear. Not only did the incomparable skill of Boito in weaving librettos from Shakespeare's plays fire the inspiration of the aged musician to scale heights far beyond any that he had previously attempted, but the merely musical influence of the collaborator counted for much as well. The influence of Boito's "Mefistofele" may be traced in many scenes of "Otello," and it is plain that the business of collaboration was far from finished when the poet handed his librettos to the composer.

"Otello" and "Falstaff" stand like the twin peaks of Parnassus to mark the zenith of Verdi's career. Different in essence as they are, the one touching the limits of tragic emotion, the other bubbling over with the spirit of pure fun, they are alike in their gem-like perfection of outline, in their inexhaustible fertility of invention and in the masterly directness of their utterance. They are the very apotheosis of stage-craft. Musically and dramatically alike they are clean-cut and finished to the finger-tip. The respective librettos are

miracles of condensation, and the music is the very incarnation of concentrated energy and high-strung feeling.

"Otello" has been criticised on the score of this very alertness of movement, and on its lack of symphonic development, and it must be admitted that in its nature it is not an ideal subject for music. There is in it too much action and not enough pure emotion. Yet here the skill of both librettist and composer is most happily displayed, in the manner in which they hasten over the merely dramatic passages and linger upon scenes in which speech under stress of feeling rises naturally into song. There are scenes in "Otello" in which the music is of secondary interest, and it is just here that Verdi's inimitable sense of stage effect is most conspicuous. Where a less skilful musician would retard the action with symphonic development he, working in the spirit of Mozart if not in his form, hurries his dialogue along, underlining each word with suggestive harmonies and figures, but setting no check upon the progress of the action. Thus the purely lyrical passages and the scenes of emotion which lend themselves to legitimate development are given their proper value in the general scheme, instead of being drowned, as it were, in one vast ocean of symphonic harmony, and the methods of Mozart as exemplified in "Don Giovanni" are once more triumphantly vindicated.

It is perhaps worth while to analyse an act of "Otello" in order to illustrate Verdi's manner of

working more definitely and to vindicate his treatment of an extremely difficult subject. Let us take the second act, which, after a brief symphonic introduction, opens with a passage of rapid dialogue between Iago and Cassio, accompanied in the lightest way with an occasional phrase borrowed from the introduction and the merest suggestion of development; (2) Iago's great monologue "Credo in un Dio crudel," practically an aria fully developed on modern lines; (3) dialogue between Otello and Iago, rapid recitative culminating in snatches of accompanied cantilena; (4) the lyrical episode of the Cypriote fishermen bringing gifts to Desdemona; (5) quartet of the handkerchief; (6) scene between Otello and Iago, largely dialogue, the three culminating points of emotion, Otello's farewell to glory, Iago's dream, and the final duet in which Otello calls on the marble heavens for vengeance, being developed at length with all the available resources of the orchestra. Thus it is plain that though worked out in the modern way in one unbroken musical conception, the form of this act is practically that of "Don Giovanni." It would have been useless to treat a libretto of this kind in the manner of "Tristan," which, being practically all emotion and no action, bears and indeed demands extended musical development. In "Falstaff" a somewhat similar method is pursued, though the general scheme of the work is more in favour of symphonic development than in "Otello," in many scenes of which the dialogue is

of such supreme importance that the orchestra is not permitted to distract the attention of the audience from it in any way. "Falstaff" is therefore in a sense more Wagnerian in structure than "Otello," a point of which much has been made by critics anxious to convict the Italian composer of Germanising tendencies, but in essence it owes little if anything to Wagner. The voice is still the centre of Verdi's musical system, though around it he weaves a prismatic web of orchestral intricacy such as in his earlier days he never dreamt of, and Wagner's elaborate system of leading-motives, for all the use that Verdi makes of it, might never have existed. Each scene in "Falstaff" is complete in itself, the music as it trips along mirroring each passing shade of expression with the most delightful freshness and lucidity of inspiration. Mozart is rather the master that Verdi's "Falstaff" recalls. It has his exquisite lightness of touch, his rhythmic fertility, his command of a perennial flow of delicious melody, and his charming snatches of tenderness which make so welcome a contrast to the ebullient high spirits of the work as a whole. Viewed from any and every point of view "Falstaff" approaches the miraculous, not least in this that it was written in his eightieth year by a man who until then had dealt almost entirely with subjects of the most tragic description.

"Falstaff" was Verdi's farewell to the stage, but actually his last work was a set of "Pezzi Sacri," which included a setting of the "Laudi alla

Vergine" from Dante's "Paradiso" for female quartet, a "Stabat Mater" and a "Te Deum" for chorus and orchestra. In these noble and beautiful pieces there was still no sign of failing power. Compared with the sensuous beauty of the "Requiem" they seem stern and severe, but they are to the full as typical of Verdi's profound intensity of feeling, of his amazing directness of expression, of his scorn of mere cleverness for cleverness' sake, and what is perhaps most characteristic of the composer, of his unequalled knowledge of effect and certainty of touch. If one had to sum up Verdi's musical character in a word, this is perhaps the point upon which it would be essential most strongly to insist. Other men have possessed a nobler creative instinct and a more soaring imagination, but no writer of operas has surpassed him in that sense of means to an end which is one of the rarest as well as the most precious of artistic gifts. Verdi's music always "comes off." His work never gives a hearer the impression that the composer would have done better if he had expressed his thought in a different way.

As a thinker and as a creative artist Verdi cannot be compared with Wagner, but where in Wagner the actual means employed are often experimental and even ineffective, Verdi always goes straight to the mark. Verdi was not one of the great revolutionaries of the world of music. His mission was not to open new paths, but to

build with the materials bequeathed to him by the generations that had gone before. He talked little and wrote less, he was a man of action not of theory, but in his work he has left us a nobler gospel than if he had filled the shelves of a library with disquisitions upon the principles of music and the ethics of art.

BRAHMS

CHAPTER XVII

BRAHMS

NOTHING is more natural than that a composer who travels along untrodden paths and opens new avenues of expression to the world of music should arouse violent diversity of opinion. The storm of controversy that raged around the personality of Wagner thirty years ago now belongs to ancient history, but it is easy to understand why his music aroused such relentless animosity on the one hand and such enthusiastic devotion upon the other. He spoke in a language not understood by the world at large, and he had to educate his hearers to accept his view of music and drama. The case of Richard Strauss in our own day is somewhat similar. Whether one accepts him as a great composer or not, it is impossible to deny the novelty of his methods. He is a man bound to excite controversy by the intrinsic qualities of his music. There are the seeds of discord in everything that he writes. The case of Brahms is very different. Brahms was anything rather than a pioneer. He worked upon strictly traditional lines. He invented no new forms, he made no pretence at being revolutionary, yet few composers of modern times have been more vigorously

discussed or more variously judged. Brahms has been before the world for fully half a century, yet it seems that we are as far as ever from having made up our minds what is his place in the hierarchy of musicians. On the one hand, we find Mr Fuller Maitland, in the latest edition of Grove's Dictionary, unhesitatingly declaring that "as years go on, it is more and more generally realised that he is not only among the great masters, but that he must be assigned a place with the very greatest of them all." On the other, no less an authority than Tchaikovsky has pronounced him "ungifted, pretentious, and lacking in all creative power." Many criticisms as widely divergent as these could be quoted from authorities no less weighty, but these will perhaps suffice to show how far the world of music still is from having made up its mind about Brahms. If anyone cares to dive deeper into the controversy he may be referred to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which only the other day opened its columns to a most violent and acrimonious correspondence on the subject of Brahms and his claims to be considered a great musician.

No composer ever had a less eventful career than Brahms. He courted obscurity as sedulously as most men court fame. Save for one or two brief periods he held no official position, and after his youthful attempt to win fame as a pianist he rarely appeared in public. He won and retained his position in the world of music almost entirely by virtue of his published works. Yet though he held

aloof from controversy, and, save for the purpose of writing music, rarely put pen to paper, it was his fate—whether a fortunate one or not it is perhaps as yet impossible to say—to be, as it were, the standard-bearer in one of the bitterest fights ever fought in the cause of music, round whom, though he took no actual part in it, the battle ever raged most fiercely. From his earliest days the name of Brahms was the war-cry of the conservative faction in music. His first appearance as a composer was greeted by Schumann with a pæan of delight in the last words which he ever wrote for publication: —"He is come, a young hero, at whose cradle Graces and heroes kept watch. . . . One who has not brought us his masterhood in gradual unfolding, but has sprung like Minerva fully armed from the head of Kronos." It is hardly too much to say that this eulogy of Schumann's hung round Brahms's neck like a millstone for the rest of his life. To tell a boy of twenty that he is the promised Messiah of music is to pay him a dangerous compliment, however gifted he may be. Brahms, no doubt, believed all that Schumann told him, and he faced life feeling himself to be the recognised depository of the classical traditions. More unlucky still was his intercourse with Hans von Bülow, who in 1870, smarting under what he believed to be the injuries inflicted on him by Wagner, seized upon Brahms as the handiest stick with which to beat his former friend. In an unlucky moment Bülow, who was a born phrase-maker, hit upon his famous saying

about the three B's of music, coupling Brahms with Bach and Beethoven. Brahms, who was naturally a modest and retiring man, may or may not have objected to being made the tool of Bülow's animosity. Very likely he saw nothing of the latter's ulterior motive, and accepted his homage whole-heartedly. At any rate the mischief was done. Brahms's position in the world of German music was definitely fixed. Anyone who wanted to run down Wagner did it by exalting Brahms. Wagner was a wicked anarchist, striving to overturn the musical apple-cart by every means in his power; while Brahms was a serene and high-souled artist, to whom, by some kind of extra-special divine providence, the ark of classical tradition had been confided.

How far the position and attitude thus forced upon Brahms affected his music is a question which will be answered very differently by different critics. My own view is that it affected certain aspects of his production very seriously indeed. I seem to trace through much of Brahms's music a tendency to pomposity and grandiloquence, which I believe to have been foreign to his real nature. I believe he forced himself to write in a manner not natural to his genius from the mere belief that as the legitimate successor of Beethoven it was his duty to do so. Brahms's genius appears to me to be essentially lyrical. As a song-writer he was unequalled in his own time, and in the whole history of music only perhaps surpassed by Schubert. But as a writer of abstract music, despite the extraor-

dinary talent displayed in many of his works, I find him on the whole strangely uninspired and uninspiring. Brahms seems to me to be one of those composers who, save at rare moments of supreme inspiration, require the foundation of words upon which to build. I do not find in his abstract music any expression of personality. Its technical ability is beyond question, but as a record of emotion, if indeed it were ever designed as such, it appears to me to belong to a different world from the music of Beethoven, Schubert or Schumann.

There are some critics, I believe, who would not rank it lower on that account, but, to the vast majority of mankind, music that means nothing, music that is not as much an expression of the musician's inner self as a painting is an expression of the painter and a poem of the poet, is merely an academic exercise, a body lacking a soul, a shrine without a god. A great deal of Brahms's abstract music seems to me entirely soulless; admirable in workmanship, dignified in design, but bearing the same relationship to real music that a copy of Latin verses by a Cambridge don bears to an elegy of Propertius. At times I seem to see the real Brahms peeping out from beneath the mantle that he assumed, as, for instance, in the allegretto of the second symphony. That exquisite burst of lyrical feeling, so fresh and delightful in its natural grace and charm of expression, belongs to a different world from the pompous emptiness of most of Brahms's symphonic works. There we have the real man for once, not the

head-boy in the school of Beethoven. But for the evil fate that forced Brahms into a position he was never ordained by nature to fill, I think we should have had much from him like that charming allegretto. As it was, his mission choked his utterance. The high priest of classical tradition saw his duty clear before him. He put on his mitre, wrapped his vestments around him, and poured forth a string of oracular platitudes, which his admirers insist upon our accepting as a gospel of truth and beauty.

The main influence that is to be traced in Brahms's music is that of Schumann, but in spite of Brahms's adoption of much that is characteristic of Schumann's music and the often striking resemblance of his works—notably his chamber music—to those of his guide and exemplar, he was in reality but a half-hearted disciple of Schumann. The two men were unlike, not only in character and genius, but in their whole attitude to music as an art. Schumann was a romantic of the romantics. To him music was first of all a means of expression, almost the only one that he knew. In music he poured forth his soul, in music he sang the story of his love, his ambitions and his ideals of life and art. Music was to him what his palette is to an artist, his pen to a poet.

Brahms worked on very different lines. Music seems to have been given to him to conceal his thoughts, rather than to make them known. Whatever people may have professed to find in Brahms's music they have never found Brahms

there. After listening to a symphony of Beethoven, Schubert or Schumann, a sympathetic hearer will feel that he has held the musician by the hand and has heard from his lips the tale of his griefs or joys in accents of unmistakable meaning. But with Brahms it is different. He wraps himself in obscurity, he touches no chord of human sympathy. It is perhaps this very austerity, this severe self-repression, this remoteness of personality, that constitute to some minds the charm of Brahms's music, and perhaps as an antidote to the hysterical emotionalism of modern music it has a tonic virtue not without value. Yet, however impersonal a work of art may be, if it does not reveal some motive on the part of the artist, if it be not the expression of an aim or an ideal of some kind, it is merely sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. Brahms's music is too often a merely negative quantity. As Matthew Arnold said of Gower Street, it only expresses the architect's inability to express anything at all. Brahms's lack of colour-sense is another notable characteristic, a serious failing in the eyes of the world at large which the compact phalanx of his admirers has exalted into a virtue. In this respect he stood curiously aloof from the main current of his time. The wonderful lessons of beauty in the handling of material taught by Wagner and Berlioz fell in his case on deaf ears. Brahms cared little for the medium in which he wrote. He had no feeling for the beauty of orchestral colour nor for the special qualities of

individual instruments. He appears to have conceived his works without any reference to any precise form of instrumental combination. Many of them exist in two or more arrangements. The well-known piano quintet was originally written for strings alone and was subsequently converted into a duet for two pianos, treated by the composer as an independent work and dignified by a special opus-number. Even the pronounced individuality of the clarinet meant nothing to Brahms. The clarinet part of the famous quintet is alternatively allotted to a viola, and the clarinet sonata in E flat was arranged for a violin. Not unnaturally it is equally ineffective in both forms. Such being Brahms's views upon the nature and use of instruments, it is not surprising that his orchestration is singularly dreary and featureless. This very defect, however, becomes a virtue in the eyes of the thorough-going Brahms enthusiast, who will tell you in all seriousness that the composer's lofty ideals forbade him to make any concessions to sheer beauty of sound. It would be just as sensible for Mr C. B. Fry to announce that in deference to a lofty ideal of cricket he intended for the future to hold his bat by the blade and play the ball with the handle.

Fortunately, it is possible for those who find little or nothing to admire in Brahms's instrumental works, to estimate him very differently as a writer of vocal music. A variety of causes combined to militate against his success in the former capacity. To begin with he had not much to say, and he said

it in the wrong way. He was not a great creative musician, but, on the other hand, he had a lyrical faculty of extraordinary sensitiveness and charm. Like many another composer before him—Franz, for instance, to go no further afield than our own generation—he required the impetus of poetry to set his genius in motion. As a song-writer Brahms is supreme, and his influence in this respect upon modern music has been very important. In Brahms's hands the song became an instrument of exquisitely sensitive delicacy. Save Schubert no composer has ever shown so marvellous a power of grasping the most subtle nuances of thought and transcribing them in music. His love-songs alone seem to exhaust the possibilities of music in emotional expression. No phase of passion is left unexplored in the marvellous series. Such lyrics as "Mainacht," "Meine Liebe ist grün," "Wie bist du, meine Königin," "Liebestreu," "Von ewiger Liebe" and "Sapphische Ode," to name but a few of many, and excluding the whole of the wonderful Magelone-Lieder, are sufficient to place Brahms among the greatest writers of love-music who have ever lived. But Brahms's lyrical genius was by no means devoted exclusively to love. His acute and exquisite feeling for nature has suggested a happy comparison of his genius with that of Wordsworth, and in the subtlety of his appreciation of nature's influence upon humanity he has much in common with the poet of the "Excursion." Such songs as "Feldeinsamkeit" and "O komme, holde

Sommernacht"—the list might be widely extended did space permit—without being definitely pictorial transmute into music the emotions aroused by certain aspects of nature in a way that had scarcely been attempted before Brahms's day, save perhaps by Schumann. The name of Schumann suggests an inevitable comparison, and though Schumann's genius was infinitely more original and more definitely creative than Brahms's, as a song-writer pure and simple he must be ranked below Brahms. Brahms's mind was of a manlier cast than Schumann's. He had none of Schumann's morbidity, and with him passion never drifts into mere sentimentality as it too often does with Schumann. With regard to the form of his songs and the treatment of the accompaniment Brahms owed much to Schumann, but he went further and accomplished more than his predecessor. Brahms's melodic invention is nowhere more happily displayed than in his songs, and in the accompaniments he shows an almost limitless variety of resource as well as a marvellous instinct for fitting his picture with an appropriate background.

Brahms's choral music, if it covers less wide a field than his songs, is nevertheless scarcely inferior in vigour and expressive power, though it has not the variety of subject which characterises his songs. What I have called Brahms's lyrical faculty, his power of transmuting the sheer poetical essence of words into music, has never been so strikingly displayed as in his choral works, particularly in some

of the shorter cantatas—it is difficult to know precisely how to describe works like the "Schicksalslied" and the "Harzreise"—and unaccompanied part songs. As regards the latter, indeed, if one had to specify one particular form of musical composition in which Brahms was absolutely supreme, it would undoubtedly be in secular music for chorus *a cappella*. Here Brahms has the field to himself. It happens that none of the great masters of choral music attempted anything of the kind. Palestrina's madrigals and those of his period are so different in aim and execution that no comparison is possible, while the efforts of Mendelssohn and Schumann in this *genre* can as little be set by the side of Brahms's part-songs as can those of his own contemporaries. Brahms's mastery of the secrets of part-writing was complete, and there is something in the compact, concise form of the part-song which in his hands seems to lend itself well to the utterance of poignant emotion. Brahms's "Nachtwache" series of part-songs represents the highest point of human achievement in this particular form, and some of the other sets are scarcely inferior. In his unaccompanied sacred music Brahms necessarily challenges comparison with Bach, but though his "Fest und Gedenksprüche" are inferior in sustained power to Bach's motets, they are incomparably finer than anything else of the same kind. Of Brahms's choral works with orchestra, the "German Requiem" is at once the best known and the most important as regards length and elabora-

tion. It is a work at once lofty in inspiration and profound in feeling, but is too unequal to rank as a masterpiece. When Mendelssohn wrote "St Paul" he told someone that he felt obliged to put in a fugue lest people should say he did not know how to write one. Brahms seems to have thought the same, and he went the length of putting in two. He triumphantly established the fact that he could write fugues, but he ruined the "German Requiem" as a work of art. His fugues are admirable as academic exercises, but they stand out from the fabric of the work like patches of fustian upon velvet. Much of the rest is magnificent music, and is not the less effective because the influence of Bach is strong upon the composer throughout. At one point, indeed, the climax of the great chorus, "O grave, where is thy sting?" a passage is lifted almost bodily from Bach's cantata, "Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen," an unconscious plagiarism which shows in what spirit Brahms was working.

The "German Requiem" suffers somewhat from not having been conceived as a complete whole. It originally consisted of the first three sections only. Three more movements were added subsequently, and it was finally completed by the insertion of the beautiful soprano solo, which is one of the loveliest things Brahms ever wrote. Thus it is not surprising that the work as a whole does not hang together very well, though its subject gives it a kind of unity of atmosphere. The

"German Requiem," as a whole, has the impressiveness that a work dealing with death and immortality can hardly fail to have, but it is impossible not to feel that its general tone of thought is curiously unchristian. It is the terror of death, rather than the glory of eternity that chiefly occupies the composer's imagination. Rarely has the doom of mankind to wither like the grass of the fields been sung in accents of more poignant emotion than these, and throughout the work Brahms's view of death is in striking contrast to the manly serenity which I have previously noticed as typical of men like Handel, Bach and Mozart. It happens, too, that when the moment comes to paint the other side of the picture, in the chorus describing the bliss of Heaven following upon the triumph over the grave, the composer's inspiration deserts him in the most conspicuous manner and he can give us nothing but a singularly arid and barren fugue, from which the note of rapture is strangely absent. It is worth noting also that the closing number of the work presents the purely pagan view of death as a rest from the ills of life, rather than any promise of immortality. Altogether it is not a little surprising that the "German Requiem" should have been so definitely taken under its wing by the Christian Church, and an unprejudiced observer, who studies the work carefully, may justly entertain doubts as to whether Brahms was quite as orthodox in his eschatology as his pious admirers believe.

However that may be, his orthodoxy was certainly a thing of the past when he wrote the "Ernste Gesänge," which embody his farewell to the world of men. If the "German Requiem" is a profession of faith, the "Ernste Gesänge" are unquestionably a recantation. In the latter, which treat of death in as serious a mood as the "German Requiem," there is no suggestion of a life beyond the grave. The carefully chosen words leave no doubt of a purpose in the composer's mind, which indeed is unmistakable to a thoughtful reader. The three first songs of the set are blankly pessimistic, while the fourth relieves the gloom not by a promise of immortality, but by the famous eulogy of charity from the First Epistle to the Corinthians —charity, the love of man for man, the love that suffereth long and is kind, that beareth all things and believeth all things. If Brahms's farewell songs mean anything at all—and it is impossible to doubt that they mean a great deal—they mean that he had ceased to look for a life beyond the grave, and was content to find in the love of his fellowmen a radiance that should gild the very gate of death.

Finer than the "German Requiem," because more complete, more faultless in its gem-like perfection of design, is the little "Schicksalslied," a masterpiece of extraordinary tense feeling expressed in terms of singular beauty; and another masterpiece, whose transcendent qualities are not to be measured by mere length, is the Rhapsody from Goethe's "Harzreise" for contralto solo and male

chorus. The acuteness of Brahms's psychological instinct never carried him further than in this wonderful work, which is an unsurpassable instance of what music can do in illuminating the idea of a poet. It is this quality in Brahms more than any other that gives him a right to be called great, and it is lamentable to think of the time he wasted in writing his dreary symphonies and sonatas when he might have been producing masterpieces like these two astonishing works.

I have ventured to speak with some freedom of Brahms and his works, anticipating, as I believe, the verdict that will eventually be passed upon him as a composer. But whatever the final verdict on Brahms as an abstract musician may be, it would not be right to lose sight of his constant and unswerving pursuit of lofty ideals. Whether he was right in using his talent as he did time will prove, but this at least must be said of him, that in all the history of music there is no record of a composer who yielded less to the sway of the crowd, who sought more consistently to give the best that was in him regardless of applause or popular favour. During his lifetime he had his reward in the admiration of devoted friends, and whatever fate the future may have in store for the great bulk of his music, it is certain that his name will live as that of a man of extraordinary endowments and one of the greatest song-writers of all time.

CHAPTER XVIII

TCHAIKOVSKY

IF it were possible to single out one composer more than another as representative of the various phases of thought that are characteristic of the close of the nineteenth century, that composer would undoubtedly be Tchaikovsky. Summed up in a single phrase, Tchaikovsky is eminently *fin de siècle*. In feeling, as well as in expression, he is a decadent of the decadents. His emotion, though unquestionably sincere as far as it goes, is superficial rather than profound. He sinks to morbid pessimism, he rises to hysteria. His feverish sensibility is fanned by gusts of passion, his highly strung nerves answer to every psychic suggestion. He revels in introspection, he bares his soul to the scalpel of his art. He drags the pageant of his bleeding heart through the realms of music, he butchers his manhood to make an artistic holiday. But with all his lack of dignity and restraint, he is an incomparable artist, or to be more accurate it is the artist in him that has stifled the man.

He views the world, life and himself with the eye of an artist alone, he pours his own emotions into the alembic of music, content to suffer if he

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can thereby create. It was truly said of Byron, that he had but one subject—himself, and the saying is equally true of Tchaikovsky. In all that he wrote he mirrored his own personality; he is the protagonist of his own quartets, the hero of his own symphonies. As Hamlet he stalks moodily on the ramparts of Elsinore, as Manfred he wanders among the gleaming glaciers of the Alps, as Paolo he is racked by the unpitying torments of Hell, as Ferdinand he marvels at the wonders of Miranda's isle, and as Romeo he loves and dies under the shadow of the towers of Verona. If his personality is less puissant and terrible than that of Byron, his artistic instinct is infinitely acuter. No man has ever handled music with a more delicate appreciation of its manifold possibilities. In his hands the orchestra becomes alive, a chorus of voices taught to breathe at his will every accent of human emotion.

With his marvellous technique, his unerring instinct for sheer beauty of tone and his rhythmic fertility, he is the Swinburne of modern music. A generation will come for which the subject matter of Tchaikovsky's music will have no interest. We who are his contemporaries, to whom his vein of thought is familiar, can appreciate the truth with which he depicts the fashionable pessimism of the hour, but to our grandchildren his melancholy will seem mere attitudinising and his raptures will ring false, though his craftsmanship can never be called in question. He has taught the world new secrets

of expression, which, however they may afterwards become merged in the commonplaces of art, must always remain his indisputable legacy to the music of the future.

The simple and uneventful story of Tchaikovsky's life has but little to do with his music. Like many other Russian composers he began as an amateur, and it was not until he was grown up and an official in a Government office that he felt any inclination to make music the serious business of his life. Afterwards he worked very hard at composition, chiefly under the direction of Anton Rubinstein; and, unlike the majority of Russian musicians, he contrived to rid himself entirely of that indefinable taint of amateurishness which is the *signe particulier* of so much of their music. Not only in this point did he differ from the majority of his contemporaries. Living as he did at a time conspicuous for a remarkable revival of musical activity in Russia, he fortunately contrived to steer clear of the rock upon which so many of his friends made shipwreck—the exaggerated worship of nationalism. Tchaikovsky was in many respects the most amiable and yielding of men, but where art was concerned his principles were inflexible, and he wisely refused to be persuaded by his "nationalist" friends into endeavouring to express himself in any way but that which was natural to him. He was of course denounced as a bad patriot, and in Russia it is still the fashion to compare him unfavourably with com-

posers of the calibre of Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov. Outside the Russian frontiers he is of course rated at his true value, while the mob of "nationalists" is known only to be ignored. In England our sufferings at the hands of the minor Russian composers are almost too recent to be commented upon with that judicial fairness which would seem desirable. Fortunately, the attempt to thrust their pinchbeck wares upon the London public was as short-lived as it was disastrous, and the crowd of composers in —off and —sky has happily been dismissed to the country where daubs of local colour are accepted in place of design, musicianship and inspiration. As a matter of fact, Russian musicians can well be content to be represented abroad by Tchaikovsky, whose music to Western ears has as strong a Slavonic flavour as that of any of his compatriots, only that his use of the distinctively Russian element is subjected to due artistic restraint, whereas, in the case of the others, it is allowed, like Aaron's serpent, to swallow everything else. In England, we know little of Tchaikovsky save as an instrumental composer. His operas, with one exception, have never reached the shores of England, and though "Eugene Oniegin" is occasionally performed in this country it has never won anything like the popularity of Tchaikovsky's symphonies. Nor are the bulk of his songs well known in this country, though this is in all probability merely because of the

difficulty of providing singable translations of the Russian words. However it comes to this, that Tchaikovsky exists for English musicians only as a writer of orchestral and chamber music, and it is curious to note that the great popularity which he now enjoys in this country dates only from the production of his "Symphonie Pathétique." In his life-time he paid us several visits. He conducted several of his works at our concerts, and he was invested with an honorary degree by the University of Cambridge. He was always received with politeness and respect, but the general public never seems to have realised for a moment that it was entertaining a great composer. Tchaikovsky's death and the production of the "Symphonie Pathétique" changed everything. The work itself, coupled with the romantic circumstances of its creation, the fact that it was the composer's swan-song and appeared to contain in itself a suggestion of his approaching end—everything combined to captivate the popular fancy to an extraordinary degree. The "Symphonie Pathétique" became the rage; the mere announcement of its performance sufficed to pack our concert-rooms from floor to ceiling, and from this work we learnt gradually to appreciate Tchaikovsky's other compositions, so that now his symphonies, suites and symphonic poems are among the most popular in the concert répertoire. It was not without good reason that the popular imagination, which Tchaikovsky's earlier works had left comparatively

cold, was touched by the "Symphonie Pathétique." It is without question the composer's most characteristic work, that into which he put most of himself. The fourth symphony may excel it in point of sheer picturesqueness, the fifth in poetic feeling, but in the sixth symphony we feel that strongly personal note which rarely fails to appeal to sympathetic souls. Tchaikovsky affixed no programme to it, but the story of a tortured soul, seeking an anodyne for its misery in the rapture of pleasure and in the ecstasy of battle, and finally sinking to hopeless pessimism and suicide, is scarcely to be misread. That the lesson it teaches is noble or inspiring can certainly not be claimed, but the resources of music for expressing human emotions have rarely been employed in our time with more consummate success. When Tchaikovsky wrote the "Symphonie Pathétique" he had attained such mastery of his material as gives him a right to rank among great musicians. Whatever he chose to say, he could express with absolute certainty of touch. In the "Symphonie Pathétique" there are no effects that miss fire, no details that do not "come off." Never do we feel, as is the case in so much modern music, that the thought is struggling as it were for expression behind an intervening veil. The form of the work is new, the structure of the movements is unconstitutional, but every innovation in it is justified by success. As to its value as a work of art, we can admire it without being under any illusions with regard to

its definite place in the history of music. It must stand as a very interesting and complete picture of a certain frame of mind, probably the completest expression in music of *fin de siècle* pessimism that has ever been written. As such we to whom this attitude of mind is familiar find it enthralling, but future generations which know nothing of our psychological struggles will marvel at the enthusiasm which the "Symphonie Pathétique" excited. To them it will sound as empty and frigid as a Mendelssohn symphony does to our modern youth. It has not, it does not pretend to have, that nobility of thought, that breadth of mental view which alone can give immortality.

In Tchaikovsky's other works the same qualities and the same limitations are to be found. Of his earlier symphonies, the fourth and fifth alone can justly be compared to the "Pathetic." There is fine music in the earlier three, but they do not show the same technical accomplishment. The fourth symphony is less subjective in feeling than the fifth and sixth, but it is no less brilliant an example of the composer's extraordinary musicianship. In one of his letters the composer has given a sketch of the programme on which he worked in this symphony—the idea of relentless fate which ever steps in to frustrate man in his quest for happiness. The first movement is said to illustrate the contrast between grim reality and flattering dreams, the second is a picture of the melancholy induced by retrospection, the

third is merely a series of capricious arabesques not expressing any definite feelings, while the finale draws a moral by setting the rich healthy life of the people by the side of anæmic culture. Tchaikovsky added, however, that this sketch was far from exhausting the poetical meaning of his symphony, and indeed it says nothing of what to Western ears is the most striking feature of the work, its strong national feeling. It has a barbaric splendour of colour that is not common in Tchaikovsky, and shows how easily, when he chose, he could beat his "nationalist" fellow-countrymen on their own ground. For once the background is the most interesting part of the picture, and in this symphony we care a good deal less about the fate-ridden hero than about the gorgeous and ever shifting scenes through which his destiny leads him. At one time we seem to be listening to the trumpets of Tamerlane on the trackless plains of Tartary, at another sweeping with the wild hordes of Scythia along the banks of the Volga. Then the night falls and the camp fires of a countless host twinkle beneath the stars. The hours are beguiled by the songs of bright-eyed Circassians and the sinuous dances of bejewelled slaves from the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Nothing more picturesque has ever been written than this astonishing work. It glows with every colour known to the modern palette. It is encrusted with ornament; it is viciously florid, if you will, and frankly decadent; but it is a wonderful

example of what can be done in sheer scene-painting by a master of orchestral effect. The fifth symphony is less flamboyant in style, but it is far profounder in thought, and sincerer because more personal in feeling. For myself I should be inclined to call it Tchaikovsky's masterpiece. It has not the glitter and dazzle of the fourth, nor the agonised emotion of the sixth, but it is, if I may use such term in connection with music, and above all with Tchaikovsky's music, more philosophical than either. The idea upon which it seems to me to be built is one which is new to music—indeed it is only in these latest days that it could have been thought possible to clothe such an idea in music at all—but it is not new to literature. It occurs in a famous and beautiful passage in the "Troades" of Euripides, which I propose to quote. The idea is that of a great sorrow turned by some mysterious power to glory and splendour. The following passage from the "Troades" is spoken by Hecuba, who has seen her sons slain one by one in battle, her husband stricken down by her side, her daughter Polyxena sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles, Cassandra and Andromache snatched from her arms to be the concubines of Greek chieftains, and last of all her little grandchild Astyanax dashed down from the walls of Troy, lest he should grow up to be the saviour of his country. Every woe that God and man can devise has been heaped upon her head, and this is what she says:—

"Lo, I have seen the open hand of God,
And in it nothing, nothing, save the rod
Of mine affliction, and the eternal hate,
Beyond all lands, chosen and lifted great
For Troy! Vain, vain were prayer and incense-swell,
And bulls' blood on the altars. All is well!
Had He not turned us in His hand, and thrust
Our high things low, and shook our hills as dust,
We had not been this splendour, nor our wrong
An everlasting music, for the song
Of earth and heaven!"

Writing of this passage, Mr Gilbert Murray, whose incomparable translation I have ventured to quote, says: "The poet actually sees in the great misery some element of beauty, which is really there, but which we stupider people have not seen. He discovers it by some rare sensitiveness; and then, by that secret power, which lies in most forms of art, of 'making great things small and small great,' he selects this small and precious element, and fosters it, till it has spread its influence over the whole. Out of misery and shame and evil he makes Tragedy." I think no one who hears Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony with understanding ears can doubt that some such idea as this was working in his mind when he wrote it. Throughout the work runs the sad motto theme, breathing shame and sorrow, deepening the gloom of the tragic passages, darkening the sunlight of the brief glimpses of gaiety, yet in the end this very theme, fostered as Mr Murray says by the secret power of art, becomes transfigured and shines forth in

splendour and glory that are born from itself alone. I do not suppose that Tchaikovsky knew much more about Euripides than Euripides knew about Tchaikovsky, but their minds met at one point, and what the Greek poet sang more than two thousand years ago, the Russian musician has put into music in our own day.

After the symphonies comes the long procession of Tchaikovsky's symphonic poems, gorgeous in their varied splendour, some of them, like "Manfred" and "Francesca da Rimini," quivering with high-strung emotion; others, like "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Tempest," brilliant tone-pictures gleaming with the ever-changing hues that the great master of orchestral colour knew so supremely well how to group and contrast. Those who resent the lack of classical design in Tchaikovsky's symphonies will be disposed to find his choicest work in these symphonic poems, which frankly follow an architectural scheme of their own, guided by no fancied dependence upon the methods of the past. Their intrinsic value depends very much upon what the hearer expects to find in them. If he expects anything like a musical equivalent for the poems or plays upon which they are founded he will be grievously disappointed; if, on the contrary, he is in sympathy with Tchaikovsky's attitude of mind he will find a curious interest in noting how the composer writes himself, as it were upon his subject. There is very little of Shakespeare and a great deal of Tchaikovsky, for

instance, in his "Hamlet," "Tempest" and "Romeo." Dante only furnished the theme of Tchaikovsky's "Francesca," and if the spirit of Byron is stronger in "Manfred" it is only because Byron and Tchaikovsky have so much in common. "The Tempest," which is an early work, is frankly a piece of scene-painting. Of the grandeur and profundity of Shakespeare's swan-song there is hardly a suggestion. Tchaikovsky scarcely aims at more than a picturesque presentment of the landscape, nor can much more be said of his "Romeo," a work from which the voice of sex, as from most of Tchaikovsky's writings, is curiously absent. But within their prescribed limits both works are singularly brilliant examples of Tchaikovsky's happy treatment of the pictorial. In "Hamlet," "Manfred," "Francesca," and the early symphonic poem "Fatum," there is more of the Tchaikovsky of the symphonies; "Fatum," in particular, seems like a kind of imperfect sketch for the "Symphonie Pathétique," but on the whole the symphonic poems suggest a different point of view from that which Tchaikovsky gives us in his symphonies. They are as it were the comments on certain masterpieces of literature made by a man of striking personality, and serve to illuminate the character of the critic as much as the thing criticised. In "Hamlet" we meet once more the hero of the "Symphonie Pathétique," lashing himself to heights of fevered emotion and sinking to depths of sunless gloom. There is but little of Dante in

Tchaikovsky's Paolo and Francesca, outlined for a moment against a background of such ghastly terror as only one of the greatest masters of orchestral colour could paint. It is Tchaikovsky who speaks through their lips, he who has drunk the cup of anguish to the dregs, and found it sweetened by no touch of pity.

Tchaikovsky is never more himself than in his chamber music, and this is a point worth noting, since the great tone-painters of the orchestra rarely succeed within the austere limits of the quartet. Yet Tchaikovsky wrote nothing more intimately personal, nothing in which his peculiar vein of morbid feeling was more faithfully mirrored than his quartets in D and E flat and his great trio in A minor, while the lighter moods of his varied personality are depicted with infinite grace and charm in his string sextet "Un Souvenir de Florence," a work in which, as in his gay and brilliant Italian Capriccio, he paid an artist's tribute to the immortal enchantment of Italy. It is pleasant to find in these and similar works another Tchaikovsky than the storm-tossed pilgrim of fate whom we know so well in the "Symphonie Pathétique." Tchaikovsky had no humour, but in his lighter moments there is the indescribable charm of a gentle nature that has kept the fragrance of childhood and loves the simple things of life for their own simplicity. Such we find him in his delightful "Casse-Noisette" ballet, a work that in its airy freshness and delicate sentiment seems like a tale of Hans Andersen transcribed

into music. Two works more different in feeling than the "Casse-Noisette" ballet and the "Symphonie Pathétique" it would be difficult to conceive, and the two together give a good idea of the range of Tchaikovsky's talent, and go far towards explaining the secret of his influence upon contemporary music. How great that influence has been it is hardly necessary to state. That Tchaikovsky's personality will be an abiding power in music, as Beethoven's and Mozart's have been, is not to be believed. His view of life, summing up as it does a vein of thought and feeling characteristic of his epoch, will have little interest for generations to come; but the secrets that he has taught the world of music will be a possession for all time. His unique feeling for the subtler mysteries of orchestral colour has opened our eyes to new worlds of beauty. He has brought the East to the West on the wings of art, uniting the sheer glory and magnificence of colour of the one to the instinct for form and design of the other. That this mystic marriage is celebrated in his music is a sufficient guarantee of the permanence of his place among the great masters of tone-painting.

CHAPTER XIX

RICHARD STRAUSS

AT any given point in the history of music there is nearly always one prominent figure round whom rages most fiercely the never-ceasing battle between conservatives and radicals—the battle which has raged ever since the first radical scandalized his fellows by trying to shave himself with an oyster shell, and will rage until the last conservative sinks into a frozen slumber on the deserted crust of this sunless globe. Twenty years ago Wagner was the rallying-point of the conflict. To-day it is Richard Strauss. The tide of musical progress has moved a stage farther up the beach, but the Mrs Partingtons of the hour are as busy with their mops and as persistent with their cries of "Thus far and no farther" as ever. The old foolish comedy is being played over again, with the old tags and the old catch-words. Strauss's music is impossible, it is ugly, it goes too far—just what was said of Wagner twenty years ago. And the result will be the same. The Mrs Partingtons will be driven back inch by inch, the tide will erase their footsteps, and in another twenty years they will be mopping away as vigorously as ever at some new invader, and crying that Strauss represents the

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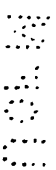

final boundary of the legitimate in music, just as they now cry of Wagner, whom twenty years earlier they denounced as fiercely as they now denounce Strauss.

Strauss's reputation is of comparatively recent growth. When Hermann Levi played his first symphony in 1881, he became known to a select few as a musician of rare endowments and extraordinary promise, and year by year as he produced his earlier symphonic poems and numerous songs of exceptional originality and true lyrical fervour he gained still wider repute, but it is only since he reached what we may call his latest and maturest manner in "Also sprach Zarathustra," "Don Quixote," and their successors that he has undeniably stepped into the position of the foremost composer of his time, a position which even those who least approve of him and his methods cannot deny him. Strauss's development is a singularly interesting study. In his second symphony in F minor and the other works which he wrote in the early eighties, such as the serenade for wind instruments, the Burleske for piano and orchestra, and the "Wanderers Sturmlied," the influence of Brahms is all-powerful. These youthful efforts of Strauss's are brilliant pieces of student work. The mastery of form and material displayed in them is irreproachable. They are fresh, spirited and promising, but to the ordinary ear they carry no indications of the revolutionary spirit which animates his later works. His first two symphonic

poems mark a step forward. In them is the germ of his later development. In "Aus Italien," "Macbeth," and "Don Juan," Strauss frankly avows himself a musical descendant of Berlioz and Liszt. "Aus Italien" follows the lead of Berlioz's "Harold." It is a picture of Italy *vu à travers un tempérament*, Italy seen through Strauss's spectacles, a brilliant piece of scene-painting coloured by the special bias of the composer's personality. In those early days Strauss had hardly found himself; and his Italian reminiscences, striking as they are in many ways, have not the force of individuality necessary to bind a mere string of picturesque impressions into an artistic whole. "Macbeth" is a romantic study, also in the manner of Berlioz, but less happily contrived than the scenes of Italian travel. In "Don Juan" Strauss took up the mantle worn for a moment by Beethoven in his "Coriolan" overture, with which Liszt had striven to clothe a personality too weak to carry its giant folds. "Don Juan" is an exercise in musical psychology, a piece of musical character-drawing. It is hardly programme music, save in the sense that all music built upon a poetic basis is programme music. It is the picture of a man, drawn with consummate skill and coloured with all the resources of the modern orchestra. It reveals Strauss as a psychologist, as a student of human nature and a critic of life, no less vividly than as an accomplished musician. "Don Juan" tells no definite story, it puts before us the man himself, rioting in the lust

of the eye and the pride of life, a voluptuary and a cynic, to whom life is pleasure and woman a toy. To say that there had been nothing of its kind in music before would be an exaggeration. Beethoven had shown the world a Coriolanus, drawn with the massive grandeur of Michael Angelo; Liszt had put forth his best powers to portray Faust in music; but here was a new force arisen, a tone-poet as well as a tone-painter, an incisive analyst of character with all the colours of the rainbow on his palette. Strauss's next work, "Tod und Verklärung" ("Death and Transfiguration"), is treated from a slightly different point of view, being founded upon a poem in which certain definite moods are in turn indicated. It thus follows to a certain extent the general design of a merely descriptive symphonic poem, the difference being that Strauss treats in music not so much actual incidents as the emotions they inspire, thus confining music to its strictly legitimate sphere. Further, although the poem deals with the death and transfiguration of one particular human being Strauss takes wider ground, and seems in the broad sweep of his art to take all mankind as his subject, and to give expression to their struggles and final deliverance in an infinitely more extended sense than is suggested by the poem on which he ostensibly worked. If we divide Strauss's career into three sections, as seems a convenient and reasonable plan, of which the early symphonies, the serenade and the other works of his boyhood form

the first section, "Tod und Verklärung" will represent the climax of his second period. So far many who term themselves thoroughly conservative musicians will consent to follow him.) "Tod und Verklärung" has none of the revolutionary qualities that form so pronounced a feature of Strauss's later works. Granted that it is legitimate for music to be written to a programme at all, which few save a little group of ultra-classical purists would deny, no fault can be found with the subject of "Tod und Verklärung." That it is painful must be admitted, but that the struggle of humanity in the implacable grasp of death and its final winning to a great peace and serenity is not a fit and proper subject for musical treatment can hardly be questioned save by those who look upon music as merely an agreeable aid to digestion. Nor can the methods of Strauss be called in question by any reasonable musician. He has sought by every means known to music to add poignancy to the various phases of the mental conflict that forms the subject of the work, with the result that "Tod und Verklärung" is perhaps the most *émotionnant* piece of music ever written. Its violent contrasts of feeling, its plunges from tender pathos to abysses of physical and mental horror might with some justice be called sensational, were it not that the close of the work, with its broad and magnificent melody of triumph, lifts the spirit into such a region of celestial tranquillity that all that has gone before is felt to be but a prelude to this wonderful song of victory. Technically speaking,

"Tod und Verklärung" is, as I have said, the climax of Strauss's second period. After writing that work he left the beaten track, which his genius had already illuminated with new and strange radiance, and plunged forth into unknown paths, upon which at first he found few to follow his footsteps.

In "Till Eulenspiegel" we have Strauss again at his philosophic standpoint. Till, the gayest and most light-hearted of rogues, is the incarnation of the spirit of revolt. His hand is against every man's; he is always in opposition. Under the guise of a rollicking scherzo Strauss gives us a scathing indictment of the powers that be. In his merriment there is a ring of bitterness, and behind the grinning mask you can catch the gleam of an avenger's eye. Not only in subject does Strauss prove himself an anarchist in "Till Eulenspiegel." His revolutionary view of harmony is here revealed for the first time. Here we have him for the first time as a pioneer, destined to open new avenues of expression to his contemporaries. It is difficult to define Strauss's attitude towards harmony. It has been said that he views music from a horizontal as well as a vertical standpoint, and in this it is curious to compare his works with those of the Elizabethan composers. There are many passages in the works of Byrd and Orlando Gibbons, to quote two of the boldest harmonists of that epoch, which seem merely discordant if viewed vertically. It is only when they are viewed horizontally that the

strange harmonies and false relations become comprehensible. A particularly striking instance of this is to be found in Orlando Gibbons's Easter anthem, "If ye be risen again," of which Sir Frederick Ouseley in editing it wrote, "the composer has fallen into the error of attempting to represent the antagonism of the ideas of life and death by the use of discords utterly intolerable to modern ears." The question of what is and what is not intolerable to modern ears is one that cannot be settled off-hand, and as a matter of fact Gibbons's harmonies, crude and dissonant as they appear to the eye, become perfectly comprehensible when regarded as part of a deliberate contrapuntal scheme and in performance are by no means so outrageous as they seem to the reader. Much the same may be said of Strauss, and it is significant that in the few years, comparatively speaking, that he and his works have been prominently before the public he has already succeeded in educating a large section of the musical world to accept the advanced view of harmony of which he is the apostle. There are still many critics who declaim loudly and persistently against his "ugliness," but we are coming more and more to appreciate the fact that there is no such thing as "ugliness" pure and simple, and that our own views of what is ugly depend solely upon the training that our ears have received. Every harmonic pioneer has been in turn accused of "ugliness," but though the men of his own time may never succeed in grasping the reformer's view

of what is beautiful, the rising generation very soon contrives to assimilate the new creed. Wagner is, of course, the classic instance in modern times of a musician who had, like Lord Beaconsfield, to educate his party. The critics of the sixties and seventies almost unanimously denounced his music as ugly. "Tristan" was "a miracle of cacophony"; even "Die Meistersinger" was "a monstrous caterwauling." To a musician of to-day it is barely credible that only a generation ago such criticisms were possible, but they actually represent the opinion of the majority of cultivated musicians at that time. Bearing this in mind we should be cautious in dismissing Strauss as "ugly." It is wiser to admit that a certain amount of training is necessary before our ears can become completely reconciled to Strauss's innovations, and to admit also that it is within the bounds of possibility that a day will come when Strauss's views of harmony will be as universally accepted as Wagner's are at the present moment.

"Till Eulenspiegel" lent itself naturally to harmonic audacities. The freakish character of the hero and his attitude of revolt to existing institutions would have tempted a much less revolutionary musician across the border-line of academic tradition. Strauss leapt the frontier at a bound and plunged into the devious mazes of his third period. His score abounds with passages at which conservative musicians hold up their hands in horror, but not even his bitterest enemies can deny the masterly

accomplishment of his technique and particularly his amazing faculty of orchestration. The score of "Till Eulenspiegel" sparkles with the diamantine lustre of an inexhaustible musical wit and imagination. The laughter of the satirist is transmuted into music that seems alive with innumerable points of twinkling merriment. Strauss ranges from the broadest guffaw to the bitterest rictus of cynicism. Under his magic touch the orchestra laughs, chatters, sneers and capers as it has never done before, and through all runs a deep and tender sympathy for suffering humanity and a fiery indignation against insolence and oppression, which humanizes the whole and lifts the work from mere burlesque to the rank of a serious criticism of life.

In "Also sprach Zarathustra" Strauss takes us into a world very different from that of "Till Eulenspiegel." In this wonderful work, in which Strauss rose to heights far loftier than any he had previously attained, we are not, in spite of its name, to look for anything like a definite attempt to set the philosophy of Nietzsche to music. Such an attempt would in truth embody a misconception of the capabilities of music of which so consummate an artist as Strauss could never be guilty. To correct any such impression he has taken especial care to inform the world what his actual aim in writing "Zarathustra" was. "I did not intend," he has said, "to write philosophical music, or to portray Nietzsche's great work musically. I meant to convey in music an idea of the development of

the human race from its origin, through the various phases of development, religious as well as scientific up to Nietzsche's idea of the *Uebermensch*." The work is thus the story of the adventures of a soul, and, as in Strauss's other works, not merely the soul of an individual, but the soul as it were of mankind in general. Strauss begins with a magnificent sunrise-scene, imposing in design and gorgeous in colour. We are to conceive the hero standing upon a lofty mountain, bathed in the glory of the morning, as in the *Vorrede* to Nietzsche's "Also sprach Zarathustra." The spectacle of the rising sun fills him with the vague raptures of Pantheism, but soon there comes upon him a longing to solve the riddle of the universe. His religious feelings are invaded by doubt. In the orchestra the melodies of the "Credo" and "Magnificat" contend in vain with the strange chromatic harmonies that symbolize the obstinate questionings of invisible things. From this conflict arises a mighty impulse to action. Zarathustra leaves his mountain top and descends to earth, where the joys and passions of human life meet him. He revels for a time in pleasure, till disgust possesses him and he sings the grave-song of his youth and turns for consolation to science, as exemplified in a learned fugue. Then comes the period of what Strauss calls his convalescence, which ends in joy as symbolized by the dance. His virtue, in the words of Nietzsche, has become a dancer's virtue, he leaps with both feet in gold-

emerald delight, he laughs under rose trees and hedges of lilies, it is his Alpha and Omega that all heaviness is turned to lightness, every body to a dancing thing, every spirit to a bird. But the wild rapture of the dance sinks in time to calmness, and finally the victorious *Uebermensch* chants his Night-Wanderer's song: "O men, give heed! What says deep midnight? I slept and from dreams I awakened. The world is deep and deeper than day deemed. Deep is her woe, joy deeper still than heart's sorrow. Woe cries: Perish; but all Joy craves for Eternity, deep, deep Eternity!" In the close of his "Zarathustra" Strauss leaves the guidance of Nietzsche. The philosopher gives the victory to his *Uebermensch*, but to the musician the riddle of life remains insoluble, and he ends with the strange juxtaposition of the chords of B and C, breathing mystery and doubt.

A work of this kind may be called programme music, but it is programme music of a very different kind from any that the world had known before Strauss's day. The vastness and nobility of its conception place it in a sphere far above the picturesque Byronism of Berlioz or the laborious sentimentality of Liszt.

We talk of Strauss's brilliant musicianship, of his mastery of polyphony and orchestration, but it is not by these that he is great. It is the sheer fundamental brainwork of such a composition as "Zarathustra" that puts him above his fellows. The power to conceive such a work, the

architectonic faculty that builds it up piece by piece is what gives Strauss his title to rank among the great men of music. Questions of form, of means, of harmonic innovation and so on are as nothing compared to creative ability. The lack of this has left Liszt among the crowd of second-rate men, in spite of his undoubted value as a pioneer. It is as a tone-poet as well as a tone-painter that Strauss is to be judged, and it is difficult to understand how so many of his critics can allow themselves to be blinded by prejudices with regard to means of expression in face of the far more important question of what the man has to express.

"Don Quixote," the work which followed "Also sprach Zarathustra," has been acclaimed by some critics as Strauss's masterpiece, but I do not myself believe that it will eventually rank among his greatest works. Strauss has declared that it was written at a time when he was "inclined to be conscious of and ironical at the expense of the tragi-comedy of his own over-zealous hyper-idealism," and indeed through much of the work there runs a note of bitterness, which we do not often find in Strauss's music. "Don Quixote" appears to me to occupy a place among Strauss's compositions something akin to that occupied by "The Wild Duck" in the long series of Ibsen's plays. I seem to see the composer in a moment of depression turning upon himself and his ideals, laughing at his own enthusiasms and dashing to

the ground the cherished idols of his own raising. Strauss is his own Don Quixote, and in his description of the brain-sick knight's phantom conflicts he means us to read a cynical record of his own struggles for the regeneration of music. A totally different view of the work is possible, but it has always seemed to me that some such autobiographical suggestion underlies the avowed plan of the work; and the fantastic pieces of musical extravagance that are a special feature of "Don Quixote," such as the wind machine and the bleating sheep, are thoroughly in keeping with this particular vein of thought, which indeed would naturally express itself in something like a burlesque of Strauss's real methods. Apart from this suggestion of self-portraiture, however, "Don Quixote" is an exceedingly interesting if not a specially attractive work. The adventures of the Knight of the Woeful Countenance are recounted in a series of variations on what Strauss calls "a theme of knightly character," in which all the composer's mastery of polyphonic intricacy and his command of musical pathos and musical humour are displayed in the most striking manner. The contrast between the fevered imagination of Don Quixote and the blunt common sense of Sancho Panza is happily indicated, and the work ends with a touch of tragic pathos in the death of the hero.

Whether there are suggestions of autobiography in "Don Quixote" may be an open question, but

about "Ein Heldenleben" no doubt is possible. The work is frankly a picture of Strauss's own struggles against malice, envy and opposition, but at the same time it must not be taken only in this narrow and restricted sense. Strauss treats himself as a type of mankind. In an analysis of the work authorised by the composer, we are told that in "Ein Heldenleben" he presents "not a single poetical or historical figure, but rather a more general and free ideal of great and manly heroism—not the heroism to which one can apply an every-day standard of valour, with its material and exterior rewards, but that heroism which endures the inward battle of life, and aspires through effort and renouncement towards the elevation of the soul." Truly a noble subject for a musical poem, and one with which only a very obstinate devotee of so-called "abstract music" could quarrel! How does Strauss treat it? He divides his work into six sections, describing in turn the hero, his antagonists, his companion, his battles, his work, his final renouncement of the world and his death. The nobly sonorous opening, breathing generous ardour and heroic ambition, is followed by an extraordinary passage, in which the snarls of malevolent critics and the malice of disappointed rivals are translated into a musical language of the most uncompromising realism. To this succeeds a love scene between the hero and his companion, in which a long dialogue between a solo violin and the orchestra leads up to a climax of marvellous richness and beauty, at the

close of which distant echoes of the voices of the antagonists are again heard. The battle scene that follows is amazing in its energy and resource. Never have "the noise of the captains and the shouting" been set to music with such thrilling effect. But it is far from being a mere pandemonium of noise. It is built upon a solid musical foundation, and, in spite of the discordance of many of the details, the general effect of this astonishing tone-picture is one of deliberate rhythmical unity. The next section, the hero's work in peace, stands frankly confessed as a piece of autobiography, the themes being largely taken from Strauss's earlier compositions. This movement is the least successful part of the work. It is somewhat laborious and mechanical in construction, and would be incomprehensible to anyone not versed in the works from which the various themes are quoted. The close of the work, on the other hand, is sublime in its directly human appeal. It has a loftiness of inspiration and a large serenity of utterance such as even Strauss but rarely attains. As a whole, "Ein Heldenleben" is worthy of being set by the side of "Zarathustra." Even those who like it least cannot but admit its fine design and spirited conception. As to the means employed there is at present wide difference of opinion. Whether there will be the same difference of opinion twenty years hence remains to be seen. Hard words have been written and spoken about Strauss's snarling critics and his wild orgy of battle, but many who at a first hearing found Strauss's horizontal view of harmony,

which here is carried to its farthest point, ear-torturing and repulsive, have come to admit that familiarity reconciles them to much that at first seemed mere pieces of audacious extravagance.

Strauss's last work, the "Symphonia Domestica," has won him more friends than anything he ever wrote. It is, as it were, a pendant to "Ein Heldenleben." The earlier work was a sonorous Odyssey of conflict; the later is an exquisite idyll of home life. Here Strauss puts off the lion and assumes the lamb. The "Symphonia Domestica" gives us a picture of a day in the composer's life. The characters of the story are three: the father, the mother and the child. Strauss presents them to us in themes of deep significance, and then leaves the music to tell its own tale. That tale, it need not be said, is concerned with emotions, not with incidents, and its unfolding is easy to follow to any one who is acquainted with the bent of the composer's mind. It is unnecessary to take into account the folly of various commentators, who have pretended to find in certain passages of the symphony a musical transcript of all manner of trivial incidents of household life. No one who knows what Strauss's views of music are need concern himself with the vain imaginings of such would-be humorists. The opening movement of the symphony introduces the husband and the wife, whose themes at once recall the corresponding melodies in "Ein Heldenleben." A little later appears the simple and beautiful melody of the child, stealing in with a marvellous suggestion

of awe and mystery, a striking musical embodiment of the famous "trailing clouds of glory" of Wordsworth. The introduction is devoted to a development of the three themes in a manner characteristic of the composer, after which comes a dainty and playful scherzo, a charming little genre-picture of child-life, ending in a lullaby of haunting tenderness and beauty. To this succeeds a love-scene of such rapturous and exalted feeling, of emotion so sacred and tender, that it seems almost a desecration to speak of it in terms of ordinary criticism. Since Beethoven wrote the finale to the Eroica symphony, the love of man and woman has not been sung in accents of purer and nobler inspiration. In the closing movement we see the destiny of the child mirrored in the hopes of the parents. They seem to read the future with the piercing gaze of love and faith and hope. The music tingles, as it were, with fervour and enthusiasm. We are hurried from climax to climax till the work ends triumphantly in a broad sweep of impassioned exultation. Before such a work as this, so rich in beauty, so profound in feeling, so transcendent in scientific mastery of musical art, it is no wonder that many of Strauss's detractors have been reduced to silence. The "Symphonia Domestica" revealed an aspect of his genius for which many of those who thought they knew him best were little prepared. The prevailing note of the work is tenderness. Little as his methods recall those of Mozart, there is in Strauss a vein of feeling which recalls

the magical touch of that arch-enchanter. He has something of Mozart's wise sad humanity, something of that half-playful yet infinitely tender sympathy for the joys and sorrows of mankind which touches at the same moment the springs of laughter and of tears. In the "Symphonia Domestica" there is hardly a trace of the bitterness and cynicism which crop up in some of Strauss's earlier works. There are passages in it which at a first hearing seem freakish and extravagant, but as the work becomes familiar these seem to drop into their places in the general scheme, and as a whole the work gives an impression of unity such as perhaps is conveyed by no other of Strauss's important compositions. Elaborate as is its workmanship—and it yields to none of its predecessors in contrapuntal intricacy and in the use of an imposing orchestral apparatus—it is in the grandeur of its outline and in its fine feeling for design that the secret of its strength really lies. It is a work that fitly crowns Strauss's musical history, and bears within it the brightest possible promise for his future career.

Outside the great series of his symphonic poems Strauss's most important work has been done in song-writing. Not one of his three operas "Guntram," "Feuersnot" and "Salome" has as yet been performed in England, and I can only speak of them from hearsay. The first has been described as a brilliant exercise in the Wagnerian manner. The last two are unquestionably more characteristic in style, but they do not appear to have convinced

the world that Strauss has in him the stuff of a dramatic composer.

Strauss's songs vary in merit, but the best of them show a rare gift of lyrical expression and so rich and distinguished a vein of melody, that it is strange to find the composer still sometimes accused of a lack of musical invention. That charge, often brought against Strauss in his earlier days, is now more rarely heard. Strauss has in some degree succeeded in bringing the world to a comprehension of his view of melody, as he will doubtless in time bring it to a comprehension of his view of harmony. That he can write "a good tune" in the classical sense is plain enough to all who study his music sympathetically, though he would probably say himself that a tune cannot be good or bad *per se*, but only so far as it expresses or does not express the meaning of the composer. This, in fact, sums up Strauss's position pretty accurately. If you accept him, you must put aside once for all the idea that music is only what Milton calls a "melodious noise," a pleasing concatenation of sounds meaning nothing in particular. With Strauss music is as much a vehicle for the expression of definite emotions as are poetry and painting. He accepts the theory of the poetic basis of music in the fullest manner. You may call him a writer of programme music, and so in a sense he is, but his view of programme music differs materially from that of most of his predecessors. He has nothing to do with story-telling, and but

little with the depiction of external events. The absurd attempts at realism to which some modern composers are addicted and to which I have already referred more than once would be as impossible to Strauss as to the austerest of his academic critics. His programmes are purely psychological. He deals with the problems of life, the passions of mankind, their dreams and aspirations, their joys and sorrows, and who that has heard his music with unprejudiced ears can deny his right to claim for his art an equality with the sister arts of painting and poetry?

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